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### **Stories from London Society, Part 3 (1892-98)**

More Things in Heaven and Earth by Elaine A. Swire - June 1892

Nora O'Shea's Ghost by C. Stafford - December 1892

The Little Black Ghost by May Crommelin - Christmas Annual 1892

The Mystery of Castle Crome by Sarah Catherine Budd - January 1893

Ritter Gluck by E. T. A. Hoffmann (translated by C. Alice Elgar) -  
April 1895 (1st published 1809)

In Exchange by Beatrice May Butt - Holiday Annual 1895

The Rose Garden (poem) by Baroness de Bertouch - Holiday  
Annual 1895

The Curse of Mahendra by Russell Sidney - July 1895

The Abbott's Secret by A. Oman - December 1895

The Mystery of Oldtown Manor by Mrs. Wyndham Payne-Gallwey -  
Christmas Annual 1895

The Face on the Wall by Elaine A. Swire - Christmas Annual 1895

The Curse of the Child by Florence L. Henderson - Christmas  
Annual 1895

In the Watches of the Night by Katherine F. Hills - March 1896

The Engineer's Story by F. B. Forester - April 1896

The Librarian of Castle Douglas by Russell Sidney - May 1896

The Unbidden Guest by F. B. Forster - Christmas Annual 1896

Wolf Madness by A. M. Judd - September 1897

A Queer Picture by James Steel - February 1898

Ginevra, or "La Via Dei Morti" by Baroness Swift - February 1898 [retells  
same story as "The Street of Death" July 1891]

A Strange Apparition by Sarah Catherine Budd - June 1898

Three Discoveries of Professor Radix by Edmund Wooton -  
September 1898

The Soul Glass by W. B. Wallace - September 1898

## More Things in Heaven and Earth.

By ELAINE A. SWIRE,

Author of "QUITS : A CUBAN ADVENTURE ;" "A FORGOTTEN EPISODE  
OF THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH."

A WILD December night at Shotover camp, rain falling in torrents, beating pitilessly on the half-frozen sentries, as they vainly sought to shelter themselves in their boxes. Inside the mess of Her Majesty's 200th regiment all was light and warmth ; thick curtains closely drawn deadened the sound of the storm as it lashed the window-panes, a blazing fire diffused a grateful heat into the room. Everything indoors was in marked contrast to the cold and general discomfort that reigned outside. Some idea of this kind crossed the mind of the solitary occupant of this room as, pulling back the curtains, he saw the sloppy pavements and rivers of water that rushed along the gutters.

"What a miserable night," he exclaimed. "I'm precious glad I did not go to the kick-up ; those fellows will be half-drowned before they get back."

And drawing the curtains closer he returned to the fireplace, where he ensconced himself in a deep armchair and began to smoke. The function he had alluded to in the above elegant terms, was a large dance given at one of the neighbouring country houses. Regimental business had detained Captain Ellis, and by the time he reached the mess, most of the officers had already dined and started. Not being a very keen dancer, he was not at all put out, so having enjoyed a solitary dinner he retired to the ante-room, where the opening of our story has found him. For some time he was alone, but at length the sound of an opening door aroused him from his reverie.

"Hullo, doctor, is that you? Come and have a smoke and tell me the news."

The doctor drew another chair up to the fire and stretched his hands out towards the blaze.

"No news that I know of," he answered. "I have been writing business letters all the afternoon and haven't left my quarters."

He looked so thoughtful and pre-occupied that Ellis said :

"I hope your business was not of a painful description."

"Well, it was rather," answered Dr. Cameron slowly. "Did you ever happen to meet Fendall, of the ——th?"

"No," replied Captain Ellis, "I have never met him, but I know a good many friends of his and have heard a good deal about him. Isn't he in a lunatic asylum?"

"Was," corrected the doctor. "One of the letters I received to-day was to inform me of his death in the asylum under most extraordinary circumstances. But then, if one begins to talk of extraordinary circumstances, nothing could be more strange than his life itself; poor fellow, he had a hard time of it."

"If it's anything in the shape of a yarn," said Ellis, "you might just as well spin it now; there's nothing else to be done unless we play cards."

"I don't mind telling you about it, more especially as it was never a secret; but I warn you that you will probably disbelieve the whole thing, although it is perfectly true."

"You are raising my curiosity to fever pitch," said Captain Ellis, laughingly. "Kindly begin at once, or I cannot answer for the consequences."

The doctor smiled and settling himself back into his chair began the following narrative :

"I must preface my story by saying that Fendall's family and mine were next-door neighbours in Blankshire and also distant connections by marriage; so that I know more about Roy Fendall's unhappy life than most people, more especially as he and I always hit it off pretty well together. When he joined his regiment and I went to walk the hospitals, we rather lost sight of one another, but always heard of each other's doings from our respective families. One fine day, some nine months after Roy had joined, I received a letter from one of my sisters, informing me of Roy's marriage, and adding that he was bringing his wife down to Fernleigh Hall to make the acquaintance of his family who had heard nothing about her until the wedding was actually over. This sounded rather odd, as Roy and his parents had, up till then, always been on the best of terms. I wrote and asked my sister to send me all the details of the affair, as I could not help thinking that it was a little mysterious. Connie, like the good soul she is, immediately sent me a budget



of news ; and indeed, if she was to be believed, there was plenty of material for gossip in everything concerning Mrs. Roy Fendall. It appeared that her maiden name was Varesco ; she was the daughter of an English-woman and an Armenian merchant of Odessa. Both her father and mother had died when she was a baby, leaving her to be brought up by her father's aunt, a certain Mrs. Arataria, who had an only son. Dina Varesco had run wild till she was fourteen years old ; at that age she was the acknowledged belle of Odessa, counted her admirers by the score, flirted with them, encouraged them, and threw them over with the *aplomb* of a woman of thirty. Mrs. Arataria, discovering that her son was beginning a violent flirtation with his beautiful cousin, sent the girl off to England to school and told the youthful lovers they must wait a few years until they really knew their own minds. The separation did not seem to tell much on Dina's spirits ; she had been at school for a couple of years when she met Roy Fendall at the house of a mutual friend. To see her was to admire her, and from that to loving her was but one step with poor Roy. He had only known her three weeks when he proposed to her, and she accepted him with an *insouciance*, which to any one less madly in love, would have argued badly for their matrimonial happiness. But he was simply in the last stage of infatuation, and could see no flaw in her anywhere. She insisted on their engagement being kept a secret, and also the wedding, on the plea that she hated a fuss, and succeeded in silencing all Roy's scruples. After the marriage, she graciously permitted him to inform his parents of the event, and after a certain amount of warfare on paper, Fendall *père* asked the newly-married couple to come and stay at Fernleigh.

" Dina's beauty took them all by storm, and she certainly was a most beautiful woman. She had inherited her mother's golden hair and wild-rose complexion, and her father's black almond-shaped eyes with their long covered lashes and finely-pencilled eyebrows. She was small and exquisitely formed, with the daintiest hands and feet, and the most bewitching little ears. But in spite of her beauty, her new relations could not get on with her ; they were full of the best intentions, but Dina's manner somehow chilled and estranged them. She had such a curious way of gliding noiselessly into the room just when she was least wanted, and they could never tell how much or how little she had

heard. Sometimes her beautiful dark eyes had a positively wolfish gleam in them, and her sisters-in-law and even her husband seemed to feel as if she had something uncanny about her. When she at last left to accompany Roy to Malta with his regiment, they were all unfeignedly relieved to see the last of her, but they were full of anxiety on Roy's account. It was curious how they all seemed to have made up their minds that Roy would suffer in some way from his connection with her. A year passed, however, without anything taking place to justify their alarm. At last, one day a letter came from Roy, saying that Dina's cousin and former lover Mr. Arataria, had come to Malta on business matters, and as he was likely to stay some time, they had asked him to share their house, which was a good deal larger than they required. Roy did not say much about him, but the general impression of the Fendall family, was that he was not particularly fond of his cousin by marriage. From time to time Roy mentioned that Malta did not seem to agree with him, as he was frequently subject to fainting fits; he also said that Dina's cousin was still with them. Dina herself never wrote, as she considered it was far too much bother. When the regiment had been at Malta some eighteen months, it was ordered on to India. Mr. Arataria announced his intention of going too, ostensibly to see if he could not extend his business. He could not, of course, obtain a passage in the troopship, so went by a P. and O. steamer. While at sea Roy's fainting fits ceased entirely, but soon after he had settled down in India with Arataria once more as their guest, they began again. Things went on like this for about a year; the Fendalls received very few letters from their son, and those that reached them filled them with anxiety. Eventually they heard nothing for two or three months, and Mrs. Fendall was beside herself with apprehension.

"One evening, the front door bell rang and on going to open it, the old butler was confronted by the apparition of a man so worn, and haggard, and emaciated, that it was with the greatest difficulty he recognized Roy Fendall.

"'Master Roy!' he exclaimed. 'Beg pardon, Captain Fendall, sir, is that you? My mistress will be shocked to see you like this. Have you been ill, sir?'

"Roy smiled faintly, and taking the old man's arm, dragged himself wearily through the hall on to a sofa in the library, where

he sank down exhausted. His mother was hastily summoned, and after applying restoratives for some time, he revived and was able to speak.

"Where is Dina, my dear boy?" asked Mrs. Fendall. "What on earth possessed her to allow you to travel alone in this state?"

"At his wife's name, Roy turned deadly pale, glanced hastily round the room and put his hand to his neck with a queer kind of clutching movement.

"Hush, mother," he said hurriedly. "Don't talk about her." And pulling his mother's head down to his face, he said in a whisper, "Send the girls away and let me tell you while I can—before I go mad or she kills me."

"Mrs. Fendall's astonishment was unbounded, as you may well imagine, but controlling herself as well as she was able, she dismissed her daughters, and begged Roy to explain his mysterious speech. Far into the night they sat, and the mother's heart turned sick with dread and anxiety as she listened to her son's monstrous tale.

"It seemed that from the day that the Armenian cousin had appeared on the scene, everything in the Fendall household had gone wrong. Dina, never demonstrative at the best of times, became colder and colder in her manner to her husband, and finally so indifferent that Roy felt bound to say something to her about it; suggesting at the same time that Mr. Arataria's absence would be very desirable. Mrs. Roy listened to his remarks without moving a muscle. When he had finished, she slowly raised her long lashes and looking at him with an ominous glitter in her black eyes, replied in a clear, metallic voice: 'If you ever dare to speak to me on the subject again, I shall leave you and you will never see me again.' The words in themselves were not much, but the look and manner which accompanied them were so hateful and venomous that Roy felt a cold chill passing through him.

"I wish you could have seen that look, mother," he said wearily. "There was nothing human about it. Ashamed of my momentary terror, I was about to expostulate with her, but she left the room and managed to avoid being left *tête-à-tête* with me for several days. From that day forward, our household became most uncomfortable. Dina ignored my presence systematically, even when her cousin was in the room; to do him justice,

Arataria was always scrupulously polite to me, and his ready tact filled up many an awkward gap in our conversation. Still, I was fully aware that he knew of my disagreement with my wife; and at times I caught him gazing at me with an indefinable glance, which I also saw in Dina's eyes whenever I managed to intercept her looks. It was a perfectly indescribable expression, but it always made me feel quite helpless as if I were a victim under the knife and they were the executioners. I bore with this state of things for some time, and at length once more suggested to my wife the propriety of Mr. Arataria seeking a domicile of his own. Never in my life shall I forget the scene that followed. I had always felt that my wife's real character was a sealed book to me, but I then discovered what lay beneath her placid and impassive exterior. White as death, her eyes gleaming and her scarlet lips drawn tightly across her teeth till she looked more like a she-wolf than a woman, she stood and stormed at me for an hour. I felt so sick at heart to think that this furious vixen was really my delicate, dainty, ethereal wife, that I did not even hear what she said. Having at length exhausted her rage, she turned to go; but on reaching the door, she stopped and hissed out between her teeth: "The day he leaves this house, I leave it too; and then beware!"

"I sank into a chair and sat staring at the door, wondering if by any chance I had taken leave of my senses! Gradually, my stunned amazement gave way and I found myself recalling with disgust Dina's invectives and abuse. What could have caused her sudden dislike to me? For, like all men, I felt certain she had loved me once. What was the secret of Arataria's influence over her? What measures had I better take to rid myself of him without provoking a repetition of such a scene? These and other thoughts whirled confusedly through my mind until, worn out with bootless speculations, I fell asleep. It was dusk when I awoke, and as I sat still for a moment wondering why I should have been sleeping in the drawing-room, the door opened and I heard Arataria's voice in the passage saying, "You can begin to-night!"

"The door closed and somebody came to the window where I was sitting.

"It was Dina. "Are you awake, Roy?" she asked in her clear, cold voice, from which all traces of her previous anger had



vanished. Her tone sent a shiver through me, I don't know why.

"‘I answered, ‘Yes,’ adding, ‘I suppose it is time to dress for dinner,’ at the same time rising and leaving the room without giving her an opportunity of saying anything more. All the time I was dressing, I kept wondering what the meaning of Arataria's remark could have been. *What* will she begin to-night? I said to myself over and over again without finding any possible answer.

"‘When I came down to dinner, I thought I had never seen my wife look so lovely. She was a little pale, the result no doubt of her rage in the afternoon, and the filmy black dress she wore only enhanced the whiteness of her skin. Her velvety eyes gleamed like diamonds and her full red lips were even more strikingly red compared to her pale face and black dress. In manner, she was perfect and quite like the Dina of our honeymoon days. I began to think that the quarrel of the afternoon existed only in my imagination; now and again, however, I caught her exchanging glances with Arataria, curiously eager, expectant, longing looks, which puzzled and alarmed me. What could she be longing for? What had she to expect? The bewilderment in which I was kept me very silent at dinner. Dina and her cousin on the contrary were extremely gay and talkative, and their air of good-fellowship and secret understanding annoyed me more than ever. I was angry with myself for occupying such a false position; and yet I could see no immediate way out of it. The dreadful paralyzed and helpless sort of feeling which always overcame me whenever I caught Arataria's steady gaze fixed on me was terrible. I *could* not own to myself that I was frightened of him, and yet it was something uncommonly like it. And, even granting that it was so, what cause had I to fear him? I thought and thought, but I saw no solution to the problem. After dinner, we went as usual to the drawing-room, coffee having been served; Dina, to my great astonishment, opened the piano and asked if I would like her to sing. She possessed a really lovely voice which had been trained to a high pitch of perfection, but, on ordinary occasions, no persuasion would induce her to open her lips; even when we were first married it was only as a great favour that she would occasionally sing to me. Later on, the fact that I was devoted

to music seemed to be sufficient to prevent her ever singing a note. So you may guess my utter surprise at this unusual occurrence. I took it as a good omen and replied that I should be enchanted if she would favour us with a song or two. I threw myself down on the sofa and listened with half-closed eyes to the ravishing sounds. Arataria was sitting on the other side of the room and, although I could not see him, I *felt* that he was watching me with that steady, pitiless gaze of his. Worn out by the excitement of the day and soothed by the exquisite "timbre," of Dina's voice, which had a liquid ring in it, suggestive of a physical caress, I soon fell fast asleep, but not to rest; a dream as torturing as the events of the day racked my brain and exhausted my body. At first, I dreamt I was in a fairy-like garden; the scent of flowers, the song of birds, the trickling of a thousand little streams and a radiant roseate glow over everything combined to delight my senses. Suddenly I beheld Dina, her arms stretched out toward me, a divine smile on her lips and the love-light in her eyes, just as I had seen it in earlier, happier days, or had *fancied* I saw it. I ran to clasp her to my heart, but as I advanced she retreated, her azure draperies floating round her slender body. All at once she turned and flung herself into my arms, covering me with her gauzy garments. As I pressed my lips to hers, I fancied that her filmy coverings seemed thicker; slowly their azure colour faded, and Dina's yielding figure slipped from my embrace, leaving me enveloped in a thick grey mist which could be *felt*. Thicker and thicker it grew, until my arms seemed bound to my sides, and my legs were stiff and heavy. In vain I tried to extricate myself; choked and suffocated, I gasped for air; my head swam, my very life seemed to be draining from me, when again I felt the velvety touch of Dina's lips on mine; then a horrible, sharp, stinging pain in my neck, as if two red-hot needles had been plunged into it, and with a cry I awoke to find Arataria standing by my side, holding my wrist in his fingers and a smelling bottle in his hand. Dina was sitting in a low chair a little way off, playing nervously with a scarlet hand screen. Her face was colourless, save for two bright red spots on her cheek bones, which burned feverishly, vying with the dewy scarlet of her lips. They both asked if I felt better, and Dina told me that at first they thought I had fallen asleep, and had not wished to disturb me, but on seeing my complete

immobility they became alarmed, and looking more closely, discovered that I had fainted. I assured them that I was all right, and rose from the sofa intending to go to bed. I was so weak that Arataria had to help me.

“Some three weeks after this we were ordered to India, and once there I became a perfect martyr to these fainting fits. Regularly once or twice a week they occurred, invariably preceded by the same dream and the same painful awakening with the stinging sensation in my neck. Tonics of all kinds were prescribed by the doctors, but were of no use, and they soon began to shake their heads, saying that nothing but leaving India would do me any good. The curious thing was that Dina was always at the piano whenever these attacks occurred, until it became quite a joke. Whenever I saw her preparing to play or sing, I used to laugh and say, “I suppose you want me to faint, Dina.”

“Strangely enough she was never angry, but took it all in good part; she had become much more gentle and loving since my first attack in Malta. She had been growing so much prettier of late, too, and it seemed that while I grew more and more of a wreck, she became far more beautiful. Never had she been so lovely nor so affectionate. Tenderly solicitous of me, she surrounded me with the most watchful care; *too* watchful it seemed to me, for my invalid fancy thought it detected in her soft eyes a glance like that of a bird of prey intent on its victim. But I dared not breathe my vague suspicions to a living soul, for had I done so I should have been called a madman, so completely had she fascinated everybody in the place, from the doctors downwards. And, indeed, to all outward appearance, she was a model wife; so devoted had she become that she would even sing without being asked. I grew to loathe the sound of her thrilling, soul-subduing voice, all the more so that whenever I fainted it was, as I have already said, when she was singing, though what connection there could be between these two things was difficult to divine! One morning, whilst dressing, I suddenly noticed on my neck two small red marks, close together. I had never seen them before, and put them down to the bite of an insect of some sort, more especially as they looked as if they were of several days' standing, and thus dismissed the matter from my mind. That evening I fainted again, but forbear de-

scribing the scene, as everything was an exact *replica* of the first occasion. Had they not been so painful, the attacks would have been monotonous. The queer thing about them was Dina's invariable state of suppressed excitement on my recovery. Her tender anxiety, combined with the steely glitter of her dark eyes and Arataria's cold, curious stare, made me feel certain that something extraordinary was taking place. But *what* could it be? In vain I racked my brain to find some solution. If I had been naturally superstitious, it would have been easy to say that I was a victim of witchcraft practised by my wife and her cousin, and one day that idea *had* flashed across my mind. But, being an Englishman, I laughed at my own folly. The next morning, moved by an unaccountable impulse, I looked at my neck to see if the red marks had disappeared; to my surprise, they were still there and looked quite fresh and vividly scarlet, as if they had just been made. I sat and looked at them in the glass, thinking in a dull sort of way that they were just in the place where I always felt the stinging sensation on recovering from my faints. One idea after another came crowding to my mind. Why were those marks so red? Yesterday they had been quite healed—now they were scarlet and seemed wet!—nearly as scarlet as Dina's cheeks, red as Dina's lips! Why should they be so close together? It was like the mark of a serpent's fang. Arataria was rather like a serpent; his cruel eyes were enough to paralyze anybody! How lovely Dina was growing! Why were her lips so red? Red as blood!—"Blood," I repeated half aloud with a shudder, glancing hastily round the room, half expecting to see Arataria or Dina looking at me, but finding myself still alone. Slowly I finished dressing, trying to shake off the dreadful thoughts that assailed me, but in vain. All day they haunted me, assuming more definite shape until the horror of my own ideas seemed to be driving me mad. Half-forgotten stories of my childish days revived in my memory. Stories of witches, of lingering deaths, of the evil eye, of vampires. I made up my mind I would watch the little marks very carefully, and perhaps that would help me to solve the horrible mystery that seemed to envelope me. Night and morning I looked at them, and in a day or two they were healed, and had the dull red look they had worn when I had first noticed them. The next evening I fainted once more, and on going to my room I went straight to the glass A



cry escaped my lips ! The marks were quite fresh, and from one was oozing a tiny drop of blood ! I recalled the stinging sensation which invariably preceded my recovery, and even as I thought about it I seemed to feel it again, and saw a second tiny drop issue from the other little wound. How long I sat staring at my livid, horror-stricken face I do not know, but at last I flung myself on my bed to try and snatch a few minutes' relief from the ghastly thoughts which were haunting me. At dawn I rose and began putting together the things I should require for my journey to England, for I had determined to leave at once, without seeing Dina and her partner in crime. As early as possible I called on the general commanding the station, and had a private conversation with him, the upshot of which was that I got leave to go that very day, the pretext being urgent private affairs. Fortunately for my plans, the mail steamer was to leave Bombay the next day. I returned to my house, and, ordering the carriage, started for the station, without inquiring whether Dina had returned from her morning ride or not. The next night found me on board the homeward-bound steamer, and it was with a sigh of relief that I heard the waves lapping against her sides, for I had a kind of feeling that, do what I would, I should not be able to escape from the clutches of the guilty pair.'

"With a sigh of exhaustion Roy sank back on the sofa, as he ended his dreadful history. Mrs. Fendall's feelings are easier to imagine than to describe. She could hardly credit her own ears, and terrible doubts as to her son's sanity crossed her mind.

"Roy seemed to guess her thoughts, for he suddenly said :

" ' I am not mad, mother, though I confess it seems rather like it ; but just look here.'

"Unfastening his collar, he pointed to his neck. Just above the collar bone were two little red marks, quite faint and somewhat larger than the mark left by a pin prick.

" ' I have not had any fainting fits since I left India, and the scars have gradually grown less distinct. I used to look at them every day on board ship to make sure.'

"He closed his eyes again with a weary sigh, and for about ten minutes neither of them spoke.

"Mrs. Fendall was terribly agitated by all she had just heard, and scarcely knew what to think or what to say.

"Suddenly Roy started up, and flinging up his arms across his face, cried out: 'Here she is! Oh, mother, save me!'

"Whether it was fancy or not, one cannot say, but Mrs. Fendall declares she saw a cloudy, shapeless form hanging over the sofa, close to Roy's head. As she looked she seemed to see the outline of a gigantic bat with outstretched wings, evolving itself from the nebulous mass; but instead of a bat's head she saw Dina's face, her red lips drawn up in a wolfish snarl, her eyes distorted with a bloodthirsty glitter. Nearer and nearer the loathsome monster came, when just as it seemed to be sinking down and enveloping Roy in its misty folds, Mrs. Fendall struck at it with a heavy ivory paper-cutter, which lay on a small table near her. The face vanished, the mist suddenly cleared away, and nothing remained of the dreadful vision.

"On looking at Roy, his mother found that he had fainted. Summoning assistance, she had him removed to a bedroom that had been prepared for him, and restoratives were applied.

"When he recovered, he said: 'Did you see her, mother?'

"Mrs. Fendall, who could not trust herself to speak, nodded fearfully.

"'Well, you have saved me this time, but she is sure to come back.'

"Even as he spoke, Mrs. Fendall's eye was caught by the unusual appearance of one of the corners of the room. She thought she detected the same filmy cloud hanging there that she had already seen downstairs, but on approaching it nothing was visible. On resuming her seat at the bedside, it reappeared, and from that moment the Fendalls' house was never free from the mysterious thing. Whatever room Roy was in, one corner of it was darkened by this cloudlike mass. Once or twice a week the same scene would occur which had taken place on the night of his arrival. Sometimes the apparition had Dina's face, sometimes Arataria's, and on some occasions both together would glare from out the misty apparition with looks of diabolical hatred.

"This went on for some months, and then Roy had to be removed and placed in an asylum. He had a horror of being left alone, and the strictest injunctions were given by his family that an attendant should be with him night and day.

"He died about six months after entering the asylum, and his death was attended by a very strange incident.

"Seeing that the end was coming, his attendant went to ring the bell that summoned the doctor. It happened to be outside the door, a few yards down the passage. When the man returned Roy was dead, and on his neck were two little tiny scars, from which the blood was slowly oozing ; only a drop at a time, but as fast as it was wiped away, another took its place, and this went on until the coffin was nailed down.

"Nothing more was ever heard of Dina or her cousin. The bungalow in which they had lived got the reputation of being haunted, and no native would go near it after dusk, for they declared that shrieks and groans were heard there all night, and terrible creatures were seen.

"Of course I can't pretend to explain the story, and most people say that Roy was the victim of a delusion. If so, it was a delusion that was shared by everybody who entered the Fendalls' house, for the curious shapeless cloud was visible to anybody who went into a room where Roy happened to be. But I shall have to let you find a solution for yourself, as I see it's two o'clock, and I must turn in ; so good-night, old chap, I shall leave you to dream of the fair Dina."

"Heaven forbid," replied Captain Ellis so seriously, that the doctor went away laughing.

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## **Horah O'Shea's Ghost.**

By C. STAFFORD.

"BINCKS, has Kearney put forward the hands of his lordship's watch?"

Bincks turned a frightened face round. He had almost sprung into the air from his lightly-stepping feet, as Sir Stephen Buckmaster strode past him, putting the question in a low tone in passing through the billiard-room towards the smoking-room, which opened out of it. Against the doorway of the smoking-room was propped, at this moment, the lordship in question, evidently not quite sober, and laughing consumedly.

Bincks answered in the negative.

Sir Stephen swung on his heel, something like a scowl crossing his face, as he stared into the disturbed countenance of the manservant. Then, speaking in the same low tone as before, evidently with caution as to being overheard:

"Why the devil hasn't he managed it? What's the use of my making the round of all the clocks, if your master has only to pull out his own watch?"

"His lordship's valet, Sir Stephen," returned Bincks, his speech covered by another "Ha-ha-ha!" from the direction of the doorway, "don't wind up Lord Giliebrand's watch; his lordship always winds it up his-self. Kearney hasn't touched it, not to wind it, for all these years; and, Sir Stephen," he added, "it ain't no use. The party as knocks keeps the right time, though the clock-fingers do point half-an-hour forward. The party has just done it again," he finished.

"Stut, man!" Sir Stephen turned away. "Let me see your face looking less like a white owl's, or keep it out of sight—hide it in the pantry; the look on that will give the lie to all my lying clocks."

Bincks' answer was to solemnly and voicelessly shake his head from side to side, while feebly pulling down the front of his gorgeous waistcoat, with such an utter want of the poker-back bearing suited to his livery, that a distinct quiver went down Sir Stephen Buckmaster's right leg, a jerking movement which represented a restrained desire on the part of the proprietor of



the leg to kick Bincks for not adding to his other accomplishments the power of keeping up the regulation deportment when in a disturbed state of mind, owing to the impending loss of his situation by the death of his master, Lord Giliebrand.

There had been three other men grouped round the laughing Lord Giliebrand. One of the men stepped forward and caught Sir Stephen by the arm, as he turned away from his contemplation of the footman's white face and mutton-chop whiskers, the young fellow muttering something close to Sir Stephen's ear, which apparently sent Sir Stephen off into a guffaw of laughter. The two men, slim young Charlie Hammond, the young officer, and Sir Stephen, a heavily built man, with a plain face, but well-shaped head, held high, his eyebrows having the peculiarity of meeting over the not too wide space between his eyes, walked on together, both laughing in a way which seemed, somehow, for all its noise, to lack spontaneity.

Lord Giliebrand, who had his back towards them, suddenly turned, and with a would-be critical, certainly half-intoxicated stare at the approaching couple, straightened his long limbs, and met them with :

"Hullo, Buckmaster, Hammond, dear boys, why this unseemly mirth in the "—he lowered his voice in mock solemnity—"in the house of death?"

Sir Stephen's brows went into a positive fold for a moment, then with a twinkle in the eyes beneath the frowning forehead, he made a false step, and, with a glance up into Giliebrand's worn, finely-featured face, he sent Charlie Hammond's dancing-master-like figure reeling into unpleasant contact with the edge of the billiard-table, while he himself was only saved from a heavy fall by lodging his elbow with some force against Lord Giliebrand's waistcoat pocket.

He regained his balance in a second, but kept his face still turned away from Giliebrand, with a listening expression.

"By Jove! Buckmaster, there goes my watch!" came in Giliebrand's voice.

Then Buckmaster turned round, holding out his hand in solicitude, and five seconds later the watch had been shaken free from bits of glass, and was being returned to its owner with its fingers pointing to the time in keeping with the tale of all the other time-pieces in the house, so far as Sir Stephen could control

them, and Sir Stephen, visibly easier in his mind, was able to view even the lugubrious Bincks with calmness, when half-an-hour later that person brought coals into the smoking-room.

Lord Giliebrand, by this time, was lolling back smoking in a low chair. He had the full light from the window, with its quaint, cushioned window-seat, falling across his fine, yet dissolute-looking face, the early crow's-toes at the corners of his piercing eyes and the scant hair telling their story of years "made the most of," as he would have said. There was excited talk going on. Lord Giliebrand was an Irish representative peer and landowner, who claimed great rights for his "country's peasantry" in the House of Lords, and high rents from his country's peasantry on his own particular Irish estates. The Irish question was the topic of conversation, and argument waxed high, the talkers—each seeing the other hazily in the vapoury smoke, beginning to hang between the smokers as the five men puffed away—all, in spite of an affected air of ease and *bonhomie*, hovering with a protecting air near the one reclining figure.

It was grey afternoon light outside, and most of the eyes in the room instinctively turned towards the window where the light was greatest. A woman's figure crossed the sweeping ground towards the shading band of trees which marked the boundary, of the castle grounds, a tall, slim, still girlish form, with the lank proportions of two large hounds following in loving proximity to the folds of a brown cloth walking dress—a short dress showing trimly-gaitered little feet, moving with a quick, steady step, promising an intention of a many miles' walk amongst the shaggy cushions of golden gorse and purple heather. The walker was away to meet the sweet, wild moor winds, and to come back with trails of her own favourite "stag's horn moss" hanging over her arm, and perhaps a bit of white heather in the front of her cloth cap, the colour for the time being back in her pale cheeks, and a dreamy pleasure in the straightforward, blessed kindness of her brown eyes.

Very few of Lord Giliebrand's friends liked to encounter the clear gaze with which it was the habit of young Lady Giliebrand to meet her fellow-creatures and her husband's guests. Charlie Hammond—the youngest, and owing to that fact, for which he was not responsible, the best of the men who were watching the gradual disappearance of the hounds and the

hounds' mistress from view—had remarked only that morning, "I say, Giliebrand, who was the fellow who said some other fellow always appeared to him to have the Ten Commandments written all over his face? I always think your wife has the Lord's Prayer written small, half hidden, far back in her eyes."

Lord Giliebrand was gratified that his wife should so impress his prayerless young friend, so much so, that, had not Giliebrand by the time the remark was made been labouring under the conviction that by twelve o'clock that night he himself would no longer have the power of figuring as host, either at Giliebrand Castle or anywhere else in this world, Charlie's invitation to the castle would have been extended. In the same manner, had he heard the style in which a third guest at the castle agreed to Charlie's statement, there might have been another call for "a horse, a horse," in addition to that of Richard on Bosworth Field; in this case the horse's destination being the nearest railway station, with Wilmot Greenleaf in the saddle.

Wilmot Greenleaf, the real Bohemian of the party, an "illustrating fellow," and certainly not, what it is quite possible, nay, even usual, for an "illustrating fellow" to be, a gentleman, observed with great animation, while his square-tipped fingers instinctively made for his book and pencil, "Hang it, he's right. If I were to draw a caricature of the lady, I'd put a scroll with the Apostles' Creed coming from between her lips." He had further gone on to mention that he, Greenleaf, was surprised that a man like Lord Giliebrand should have married such a "quiet girl" as Lady Giliebrand.

"You might be astonished," Sir Stephen returned, with a certain insolence of dislike in his manner, "that such a being as Lady Giliebrand should have married Lord Giliebrand; but while there are needy fathers, innocent, obedient young daughters, and cautious, wealthy peers, such marriages will be made." Sir Stephen further added an epigrammatic remark, which Greenleaf's wits told him was intended to recall to his memory that the lady of whom they were speaking was his, Greenleaf's hostess, with some implication that Greenleaf was a cad to have forgotten it. Lord Giliebrand always managed that his guests should spend so little time in the company of his wife that Greenleaf might perhaps have some excuse for not having this fact clearly before his mind, but the effect of the talk was to make him close that ubiquitous sketch-

book of his without exhibiting a very neat carrying out of his idea, with which he had been busy while Sir Stephen held forth.

In the midst of the rise and fall of the men's voices, in the present conversation on the affairs of Lord Giliebrand's unfortunate country, there came on the wall immediately on a level with that gentleman's ear three loud, distinct taps. Giliebrand started up, his face white, his lips drawn back in a gasp, one hand pressed tightly to his breast. The five men, four of them on their feet stared partly at him, partly at the point from which the sound had just died away, each man with a singular look on his face.

Suddenly Giliebrand, with a spasm as if of excruciating pain, fell forward. Sir Stephen threw out his arm, supporting him across the chest, and gently forcing him back into his old reclining position, as the spasm passed off. One man offered to administer brandy-and-soda, another proffered brandy guiltless of soda. Giliebrand's pinched nostrils and white lips were already becoming less so ; with a twitching smile he made a choice of the darker-coloured liquid, drank from the glass, and in another instant stood up on his feet, with a stamp of one foot not unlike that of a restive horse.

"That's breast-pang, dear boy," coolly announced Sir Stephen, with a critical glance from head to foot at his friend over another man's shoulder. "I'm glad I've seen you for once with the fit on you."

"Here, Giliebrand, pull yourself together, and also take a pull at one of these," said that other man, offering a cigar, a slight tremor shaking his hand as he held the case in spite of his cheeriness of manner.

"Whatever 'the party,' as Bincks terms the visitant, did in life," went on the same man in an aside to Charlie Hammond, "she does the thing handsomely as a ghost ; she's up to time—it's an hour to the minute since she last made herself heard." Then aloud, "I suppose it is of the weaker sex, eh, Giliebrand ? It is a she ?" he questioned, raising his voice still higher.

"Oh yes, it is a she ; it is an O'Shea, in fact," returned Giliebrand, going off into a burst of strange laughter similar to that with which he had raised the house just before Sir Stephen had the accident with regard to his friend's watch.

"Now, look here, you fellows." Giliebrand glanced round, an agonized expression in his glittering eyes, contradicting the



laughing lips through which the words came. "You were *all* here this time ; what did you hear ?"

"We heard a knocking somewhere near you," said Charlie Hammond simply.

Giliebrand put his hand again, with the same tight clutch, to his breast. "Near me ! it seems to come here," he said, "at the very door of my heart. Six more 'calls,' as she termed them, will finish me off by instalments without any further display of the powers of persecution and punctuality which may be gained by a pretty young person in fifteen years' experience of purgatory."

There was a stony-faced aristocratic-looking little man sitting astride on a chair at some distance from the others ; he had sat thus all the time, a look of incredulity on his face. "Rats," said he laconically, and opening the door strolled out of the room. In a straight line, through the open door of the billiard-room, there met his view, amidst the shadows of the hall, the bulging calves and irreproachable parting of Bincks's back hair, and he forthwith called out, "Send round to the stables for two ratters ; old Juno and the bull-pup will do."

Five minutes later, Bincks respectfully ushered in two scampering terriers and a strong-chested dachshound. Juno and the gushing bull-pup made a dash across the room, with welcoming yaps, towards Lord Giliebrand. Juno, half way there, suddenly put on a crab-like movement, while her sharp yelp turned into a shrill whine, then backed frantically against Sir Stephen's legs. As he nipped her there to stop her further flight, glancing down, Sir Stephen saw almost every hair on the faithful old bitch erect itself, while instead of looking at her beloved master, she panted as she fixed an invisible *something* close by that master's shoulder. The bull-pup, in the bravery, but also in the funk of babyhood, not having yet learnt that there are cases, where even puppy-fawning fails to have the effect of the instant abolishment of puppy discomfort, crawled along on its stomach, looking up at the same point, while a close ridge of wiry hairs marked the spinal line down his would-be manly back.

Smash ! went a pane of glass ; it was the dachshound which had made a road to the free air of heaven, away from ghost-ridden rooms. Smash ! on a smaller scale of sound ; it was old Juno broken away from Sir Stephen, and following the dachshound, with more haste than trueness of spring, the old lady not being

so young as she once was. Only the puppy remained now with which to carry on the proposed "ratting." It still grovelled, drawing itself nearer and nearer the awful presence it, in the recklessness of utter despair, was endeavouring to propitiate by thumping beats of its tail as the pup progressed unusually and ungracefully in the sheerest humbug of humility across the carpet.

Greenleaf stooped, picked up the puppy by the scruff of its neck, and put it out of the window through the rowdy-looking aperture left to mark the abrupt departure of its companions, whereupon, with a hysterical yelping it made off for the stables.

The man nearest Charlie Hammond at this moment felt a strong grip on his shoulder from Charlie's hand. "By Jove!" exclaimed Charlie, his cigar held daintily in his fingers, as if to allow for a graceful spiral of smoke going up to the beautiful old painted ceiling of the room, where plump-cheeked cherubs disported themselves mixed up with a kind of conventional arrangement of looped-back clouds.

"By Jove!" Hammond repeated, his eyes directed to the spot from which the puppy's gaze had been inconsequently removed. "I see the shadow of a girl, in a short petticoat, and with awfully spiff ankles. She has on a short cape. I recognize the sort of thing the colleens affect about that Irish estate of yours. Oh, I say, I see her face!" And the lad, he was little more, stepped back with a horror-struck look. "Oh! I say, don't you know, oh!" and he dragged Sir Stephen along with him, clinging to his elbow, the two throwing over the card-table, with its ready packs of new cards, as they retreated.

Charlie Hammond was conscious of seeing *through* the shadowy horror that met his eyes the cool, modern, saint-like figure of Lady Giliebrand returning to the house, her hounds, with their podding turned-out paws, this time leading the way.

There was a touch on the door behind them, and Kearney, his lordship's valet, an old man walking with shuffling steps, came into the room bringing letters.

"Kearney," said his lordship, with a queer flashing smile, taking his own letters from the tray, "see anything feminine in this room? Mr. Hammond asserts that there is a woman in it."

"Me lord," said Kearney, lowering the hand with the salver to his side, standing still, and blinking in the direction from which Charlie Hammond was now averting his eyes, his old lips

trembling as he spoke, "I've seen her ever since you came down stairs and told us of your call this morning. She's been in each room that you've been in, everywhere that you've been since, and close by your side. It is Norah O'Shea, purty little Norah, that was my own niece, me lord."

"Thank you, Kearney," his lordship nodded most affably. "You always had a good memory for faces, and also for dates," he added, a smiling interrogation curving his lips and raising his eyebrows. "How long ago is it since she drowned herself, eh—fifteen years?"

"Yes, me lord, fifteen years."

"Fifteen years to remember a promise, a threat, amidst the distractions of purgatory!" his lordship gave a slight "cluck" of his tongue and upward movement of his chin. "Why, Kearney, your niece must have rivalled even you as to memory. Perhaps," he went on, "you may recall the exact order of the bad-tempered little vixen's last words. I feel there are no limits to the memory of your family, Kearney."

Old Kearney's wrinkled face had a strange expression, a blending of something of faithful service, a proportion of hate, and a little of the keen, relishing watchfulness of an umpire.

"She said, me lord," said he, "When I get out of purgatory I'll ask the good Lord to let me come me very own silf to call you to judgment."

"Really, what a memory! It is the exact speech of last night, with the additional information that she has now, as she phrased it graphically but inelegantly, *got out*, and that she has arranged to have her simple request granted at twelve to-night, but she would kindly help me, in the meantime, to keep the flight of swiftly fleeting time before me by giving three knocks every hour, a piece of superfluous generosity, in my opinion. Lady Giliebrand is still unaware, I hope——," his lordship broke off, with a real expression of anxiety on his face.

"Quite, me lord," answered the old valet.

"Thank you, Kearney. I made a codicil to my will half an hour ago, and you will find you're all right. Your young relative," he went on, as Kearney turned away his inscrutable face, "would also have found herself all right if she had trusted me. The little fiend! Why couldn't she reform, do penance *here*, and show her companions what attractions a colleen, with a

cottage, a cow, and a pig of her own possesses for the stalwart lads of the Green Isle?" and Lord Giliebrand, folding his arms, threw back his head, looking up at the cherubs retrospectively.

"Brogues, did you say she had, Hammond; the purtiest pair of brogues?" another voice broke in. It was Greenleaf's. He had pencilled in the lines of the thick folds of a short skirt and heavy little mantle, and was raising his eyes as he spoke, meaning to put in something to suggest the background of the wainscoting. As he lifted his eyelids, the half facetious, partly nervous smile on his lips froze there, and the book fell to the floor. A dark, girlish face, with drowned, set, terribly despairing eyes and wet clinging hair, the water drip, dripping sullenly from the dead face and stiff shoulders under the duffel cloak had met his gaze, the background only seen through the misty awful presence. "My God!" said Greenleaf, and walked out of the room.

"Ha, ha, ha; ho, ho!" It was Lord Giliebrand's laugh again. "Well, old man"—he rose, giving a resounding slap to Sir Stephen's shoulder, as Greenleaf presented a back view of a retreating black velvet coat—"let us make the best of it till twelve o'clock; we will go and have some tea with my wife; I might almost say my widow, ha, ha, ha!" The clock on the mantelpiece pointed to half-past five, but "knock, knock, knock." The sound on the wainscoting followed Giliebrand as he crossed the room. He reeled into the corner of a couch, his hand clutching at his breast again, his face contorted. "Damn it!" he ejaculated. "Purgatory must be a fine school for acquiring a talent in the refinement of torture. Why couldn't she come *once* and have done with it?"

"Giliebrand," said Hammond, his young face working as he leant over the elder man, "do you suppose she meant to give you a chance of what my nurse called saying her prayers?"

"How do you know I'm not praying?" said Giliebrand, with a quick upward flash of his eyes (eyes conspicuously bloodshot now). "But for the life of me," Giliebrand suddenly broke out again argumentatively, "I cannot tell why Norah O'Shea should be allowed to have *her* will in the economies of that other region. I shouldn't say she ever possessed anything superior in the way of a soul. She was a girl who, if she had lived out her seventy odd years—she came of a long-lived family, instance old Kearney—would have had to take with her a goodly array of broken command-

ments when she packed up for the other world, quite independently of any educational influence I had over her in the walks of sin."

"Hum!" said Sir Stephen's big voice, "I don't think Norah will get her own way even there, unless what she asks is desirable and just. But, between you and me, I should rather say this is some trick of that hoary-headed old relative of the—the—the shade. If I were you, Giliebrand, I'd pension him off handsomely and turn him out to grass. By the expression of his face when you were philosophizing about his departed niece, I should say it is rather surprising that you haven't figured as the subject of an inquest long ago. I shouldn't like to trust my throat, in connection with the tying of cravats, to a man who could look at me as that old man looked at you this afternoon. Norah fifteen years in purgatory did you say, and out of it? That old person has been fifteen years in it and isn't *out* of it! How he does it I can't say, but he's at the bottom of all this row."

Sir Stephen, however, did not know what to think of it, later that night, when the clock of the old church in the midst of the sleeping village just beyond the castle grounds was pointing to five minutes past twelve, and the clocks of the castle to five and twenty minutes to one. Then the master of the castle lay still and sightless, never to touch his friend's hand again.

All the men, except Greenleaf, were still in the room. They turned to go softly, Sir Stephen to take his way to the young widow his friend had left behind him. She was still up, and alone with her friends the hounds, in a little music-room, her favourite haunt. She must be told. From the distance came her sweet, unconscious voice:

"Glory to Thee, my God, this night,  
For all the blessings of the light."

Sir Stephen's foot touched something as he passed. It was the pocket sketch-book; it had opened as it fell from Greenleaf's hand at the caricature of the "illustrating fellow's" hostess. To Sir Stephen's dazed eyes it seemed that from the scroll surrounding the exaggerated saintliness of Lady Giliebrand's sweet face, a burlesqued reproduction of the clouds around the cherubic heads on the ceiling overhead, there stood out (taking form from the dots which were all even Greenleaf had dared to put in to represent the idea which had occurred to him) the words: "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

## The Little Black Ghost.

By MAY CROMMELIN,

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AN evening in May. The sun had set, and two or three faint stars were pulsing in the twilight sky. As I lay back in the open carriage and looked to right and left, scanning the forest on either side of the road, this English landscape affected me deeply with its living beauty, its memories of a dead romantic past. A green and blue world it was. A pale green one tinged with bronze above, where the young oaks extended their branches; and a blue world underneath, where the hyacinth bells were ranked in millions, a gorgeous, deep, sapphire blue, spreading far under the trees into twilight. "How lovely, lovely, lovely it is!" I exclaimed. O, it was not because I was an untravelled person that the rhapsody escaped me. The Ardennes, the Black Forest, the Bohemian Wald were familiar to my eyes. But an English forest, however small in comparison, did appeal to my very heart-strings as never those foreign ones. Why, these trees could remember the days of the Stuarts, and further back, of great Gloriana; of bluff King Hal, of the wars of the Roses; the days of barons bold, and bare-legged down-trodden serfs; of jollity in the castle, and hunger in the miserable reed-thatched hut.

Now on a wooded knoll a fine old house comes in view, almost embosomed in forest. Down in the valley twinkle village lights. It is Old Court, the home of the Denes, the lords of the manor. However, my aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Neville, old friends of the Dene family, having taken it on lease during the minority of the heir, had now been living here during two years.

"Dearest auntie, here I am alive, though half dead," I called out laughing. Then the carriage drew up at the porch, where my aunt and uncle were awaiting me with a hearty hug apiece.

"You have had a long journey. You must be very tired, dear," said Aunt Etta, as she led me upstairs to my room. Such a charming, old, wainscoted chamber as it was, with one window

looking west and a tiny turret where three more "gave," as the French say, round on three-fourths of the compass.

"Old Court is just as old as it well can be, isn't it?" I asked, looking round with deep satisfaction; "but, auntie dear, I do trust you have not given me the haunted room."

"My dear Nessie, I can assure you of this," replied my aunt solemnly, "that since we have been here, and so far as I know, *not one room in this house is more haunted than another.*"

"No. Well, that is a comfort."

"It would be more of a comfort if you also believed, as I do, that if one does imagine one sees spirits, such visions cannot possibly hurt you," rather impressively returned my aunt. "If people would only understand that when they see a ghost, it is perhaps only the *thought* of some spirit far away in a world of probable bliss, remembering for a moment its earthly dwelling because of some very tragic incident. Its mind affects somebody's mind on earth near that scene, especially if the latter mind is vacant at the time. Some persons say there are spirits earth-bound because of evil deeds. I hold to my own theory all the same."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" I irreverently remarked, while taking off my hat and dust cloak.

"That is it, in my opinion," rather severely decided dear Aunt Etta. And then we went downstairs to a kind of supper, necessitated by the lateness of the hour, nine o'clock.

Now, whatever anybody may say, I declare and firmly believe that I never slept better in my life than on the night of my arrival at Old Court. Over-tired! No; only just enough fatigued to appreciate the luxury of rest, of fragrant fine linen sheets and downy pillows. Nightmare? Not a bit of it. I slept as happily as a tired child till about six o'clock, when the growing light stealing through my blinds woke me gently, slowly, to the remembrance of where I was, and the consciousness of a glad summer world outside. At first I only blinked lazily with half-roused senses at the carved roof of my bed. Presently it struck me that it would be pleasant to rise and pull up the blinds, and open my windows wider to the morning breeze, which already sent in scented wafts, wooing messages from the wide-awake roses below. Lazily I turned on my side half rose on one elbow.



"Oh!"—suddenly burst from my lips. The start I gave made the ancient bed creak. But the object at which I stared with disbelieving wide eyes never stirred at either cry or sound. At the foot of my old-fashioned carved bed stood an equally old carved chair, covered with faded leather. In this sat a little black boy, looking at me, motionless as a statue. So still he sat, that I heard myself drawing a long breath as I gazed amazed, but not frightened—the creature was so childlike in aspect, so small. "A sweep. He must have come down a wrong chimney, and is taking breath for a few minutes," flashed across my mind. "My boy!" I had almost said aloud, but that a second rapid thought stopped slower speech. This was a little negro. Though the room was not fully lighted, I could distinctly see the woolly curls, the squat nose and blubber lips of an unmistakable son of Ham. In the same quick glance I took in that this strange infant figure wore a kind of crimson costume, and a heavy, seemingly silver collar round the neck. But these details my eyes did not rest on long enough to distinguish clearly, for my mind was almost entirely occupied by that childish black face. So still—so sorrowful! For surely there was the wet shine of tears on those round cheeks; the full lips seemed quivering with grief; the upward turn of those rolling white eyeballs and dark orbs towards my bed was one of abjectly humble childish beseeching.

Even as I stared, and while one could have counted ten or twelve, it suddenly struck me that the little negro was *fading*. He was sitting there—real, alive! I would have sworn to that before any magistrate. But now he became shadowy; more so. I could see the carved back of the chair looming, so to speak, through his disappearing features.

"*It's a ghost*," was my inaudible cry of dismay, and to my disgrace, be it owned, I disappeared also under my bed-clothes. Presently chiding myself for such cowardice, I peered out cautiously just above the edge of the sheet. The high-backed chair was empty; nobody was in the room.

Slipping out of the *further* side of my bed (yes, I am ashamed of myself, but such was the pusillanimous fact) I coasted round that chair at the utmost possible distance and timorously drew up the blinds. Bright sunlight and fragrant fresh air instantly flooded the pleasant room. Why, the very idea of a ghost in their cheering presence was ludicrous. Nevertheless, don't laugh,

dear people, I did what any other girl would do under the circumstances. Lifting the valance of the bedstead I peeped, first timidly, then with more hardihood, to be quite certain that *it* was not hiding there. Then, reassured but not convinced, I peered into the wardrobe, poked my dresses, shook the curtains. All the time I knew I had seen the figure gradually fade, but somehow the search was a comfort to my weak mind. After this I dressed myself and hastened into the garden, of which the furthest clipped hedges almost bordered the forest.

"Well, you are up early," came after an hour in greeting; and Aunt Etta and my uncle appeared smiling. "Did you sleep well?"

"Oh, excellently well, except—well, I woke rather early, that was all," I faltered. It would be a shame to spoil their appetites for breakfast with my tale.

"You were out by cock-crow. Did you see any ghosts?" bluntly asked Uncle Henry, turning an inquiring gaze broadly upon me, with a queer (what I took to be a sarcastic) smile.

Rather huffily, Nessie (that is myself) raised her head in the air and intimated that they might both laugh; they probably would; but that something odd had happened—

"No! What? Tell us all about it." "Bless my soul! *We* don't laugh," ejaculated both my relatives, eying me with such interested eagerness that I felt they were both serious.

My tale ended, Uncle Henry looked at his wife and made the odd remark:

"Etta, that is a fresh one. Did we ever hear of him before?"

"I don't remember. There are so many stories," she calmly replied.

"*Many!*" I almost shouted. "Do you mean to tell me there are more ghosts about this house?"

"Yes; two others I have seen myself. And a whole troop come one night in November; a company of Roundheads and a party of Cavaliers, who fight in the dining-room. They are only heard, though, I believe. Henry and I mean to watch next autumn for the sounds." Aunt Etta calmly surveyed me as she stated this fact. She was prosaic, hard-headed and so truthful that she never allowed her servants to say "Not at home" to an unwelcome guest, unless she could first slip out by some side entrance and stand perhaps shivering in winter time on a gravel

path for five minutes to ease her conscience. "The Roundheads tried to seize Sir Rupert Dene here one night. His friends defended him, for they had all been carousing. He was killed in the fray and his body thrown into a cupboard. I had the cupboard made into a recess, and filled it with china. You admired it last night."

"What—that?" I feebly answered, recalling the velvet-lined nook, with its Chelsea tea-set.

"By the way, was Nessie shown the breakfast parlour last night? No?" demanded Uncle Henry; adding, "Well, then, breakfast should be ready, so come along."

He did not allow me even time to look round the darkly wainscoted room with its mullioned bay window giving a view of the bowling-green that lay outside like a green carpet. Instead, he made me eat, saying that early rising ought to have furnished me with a good appetite.

After doing justice to fresh-laid eggs, home-made hot cakes and other excellent fare, I chanced to raise my eyes to a large picture hanging above the fireplace; there they stayed, while an exclamation of surprise escaped me: "Look! Look! That is he—my black boy."

"Ah, I expected as much," said my uncle, half to himself, with suppressed eagerness.

The picture was a full-length one, evidently painted by no mean artist, and set in a massive Georgian frame. It represented a fair boy about ten years old, dressed in a blue satin coat and small-clothes, long white embroidered vest, frills and ruffles; also silk stockings, shoes with silver buckles and high scarlet heels. It was a stiff little figure in attitude, yet the face looked so boyishly happy, and the right hand was laid with such innocent pride on a toy rapier, that in spite of his fine court costume one felt that the original of the portrait had been real flesh and blood. Behind him, appearing indistinctly in the background, *stood a small black page, in a crimson dress, with a massive silver collar round his neck.*

"That is little Sir Gervaise Dene, who died in childhood, and his page. Ah! I see it must have been *he*—only you never saw or heard of the picture. *Why* should the black boy appear to you?" exclaimed Aunt Etta. *Why!* that was precisely the question. This interested me even more than it did my rela-

tions, whose thought-theory as concerning so-called apparitions supplied an apparently satisfactory answer. I demurred, however.

"My little negro looked so sad, he must have been ill-treated in life. Do let us try and trace something of his story. I cannot tell you how sorry he made me feel for him."

This was easier said than done. Mr. and Mrs. Neville, as tenants, knew nought of the Dene family tales. The real owners, being descended from a younger branch that had only lately inherited Old Court, were reputed to know little more. With the zeal of hunters on a new-found track of game, of detectives following a clue, we made inquiries among the oldest inhabitants of the village and neighbourhood; but for two days we had no success. For two nights I tried to stay awake in the expectation of seeing my small visitor again. I kept my candles alight and fortified myself with amusing literature; but towards the small hours I invariably dropped into heavy sleep, and when I woke, the housemaid would be pulling up the blinds, while the candles burnt to the socket mocked my useless vigils.

On the third day came a scrap of news. We had enlisted the interest of the young curate of Dene. He was a fine specimen of muscular Christianity, who might be seen every morning with a straw hat on his head, visiting the outlying hamlets, walking as if for a wager, with a fat spaniel panting after him. So eager was he to help in the investigation that for two afternoons the cricket field missed his accustomed presence. Then he appeared radiant at Old Court.

"I have got hold of something, at least. These two days I have been hunting through the old books of the parish, and in the year 1758, in the month of May, there is an entry that the bellman of Dene did offer a reward of four pounds for the recovery of a small negro boy, wearing a silver collar. This was at the bidding of Dame Margery Dene. But to no avail, as he hath not been found."

Imagine the old-world scene. The bellman, in his antiquated garb, shambling up and down the village street, followed by a crowd of merry urchins. The deep-toned ringing of the bell; then the hoarse voice calling, "Lost, stolen, or strayed," while goodwives gossiped at their thresholds, and weary hinds trudging back from forest work at nightfall were questioned, had they seen a vagrant imp of darkness in the greenwood glades.

It would be difficult to describe how strongly the fate of this unknown negro boy, who had lived a century and a quarter back, took hold of my mind. Was he kidnapped for the sake of his badge of slavery? Had the poor child—hideous thought!—even been murdered in some lonely part of the forest? Did his young master miss him greatly—for there was kindness in little Sir Gervaise's pictured features?

"You are thinking too much about it. Put it out of your head, Nessie," said my aunt at last.

Now, perhaps others besides myself have noticed how frequently when one is bent on unravelling some tangle, or discovering a hidden matter in the affairs of life, altogether unexpected evidence will suddenly spring to light in some least likely quarter. Only coincidence, perhaps. But it seems strange, to me, at least, that having lain secret so long, the facts in question should not just as well remain dormant longer.

So it befell that, a week or so later, the most extraordinary incident I have ever known, and the strangest part of this story, came to pass.

The parish church of Dene was just then undergoing some important repairs. It was a grand old Norman specimen, with its monuments of here a Dene crusader lying cross-legged, his hound sculptured small at his feet, and there a worthy knight and his dame, kneeling on cushions and uplifting stiff hands in prayer, with eight children in a diminishing row behind them. How it carried one's mind back to days of old!

So one day roaming into the church, as usual, I found its solitude broken by the clink of hammers and chisels, while the curate was surveying the work with much interest. Some slabs were just then being raised to allow of hot water pipes being laid beneath them, and my friend called to me to come and see a curious brass inscription set in one.

An old mason helping to raise a larger slab, looked up, saying:

"We must be somewhere nigh the Dene vault, sir. I used to hear as a boy it was hereabouts."

"How is that, Giles? Surely the tombs of the Denes are outside in the churchyard."

"That's so; but before then they laid their coffins in a vault, so I've heard an old man say, who was sexton here. There was a

little lad, a child, they said, was the last put in the vault. After he died there was a break in the family, and some distant cousins came in for the estate, and *they* liked fresh air likely," said the mason, talking between heaves and pushings of the stone he was helping to dislodge.

The slab, even as he ended speaking, was raised and pushed aside, and to our surprise a narrow stone stair was revealed in the cavity below.

"The vault! That's it, sure enough," exclaimed several voices, and we drew back from the close air that came up from its long imprisonment. Said the curate in an under-tone, eyeing me confidentially, "Before we close it up again, I should like to go down there. Would you?"

"Should I—? N—o. *Yes.* Yes; I should."

Strong curiosity to peep in overcame my first shuddering reluctance. To see the very coffin of the pictured boy, Sir Gervaise, most drew me.

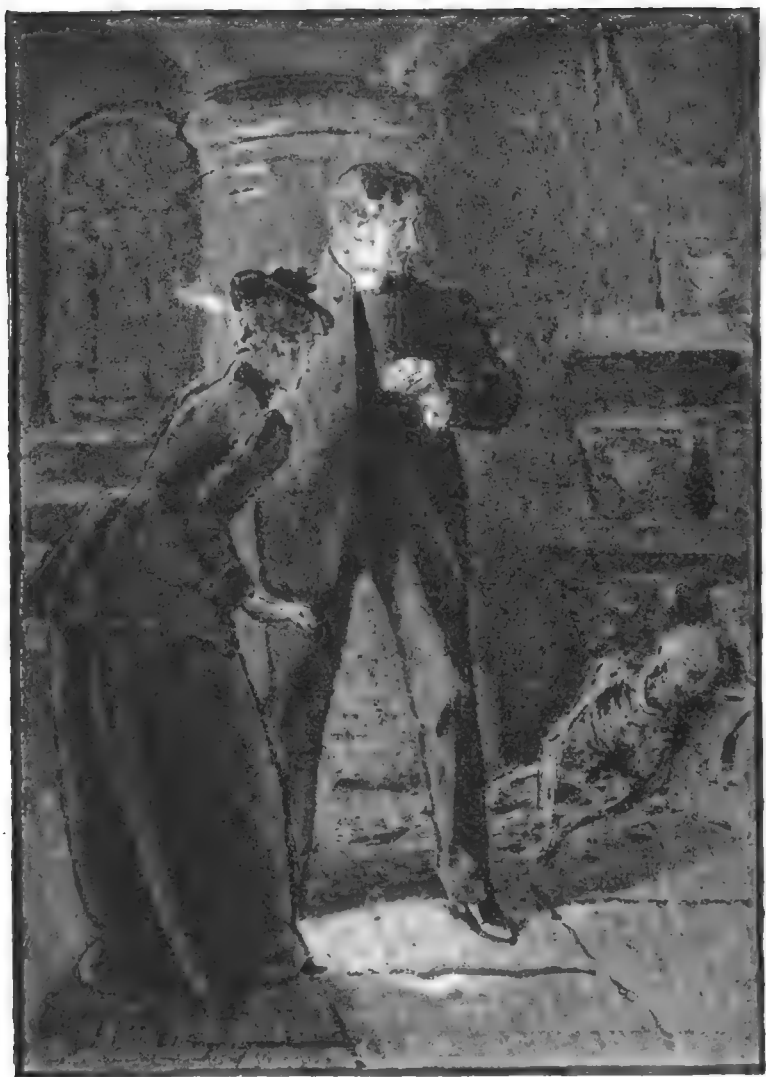
"It would not be any disrespect either, though the Denes are certainly absent; but for that very reason I ought, as clergyman of this parish, to see that all is in good repair in their ancestors' vault."

So the young man—he was very boyish in reality—quieted any misgivings he may have felt.

The hour was just then nearing the workmen's dinner-time. Our curate took the opportunity to dismiss them, saying he would himself watch in the church while the vault remained open. Meanwhile, the foreman would have time to reconsider his task so as not to interfere with the stair.

Once the tramp of the men's feet died away in the porch, we looked eagerly at each other. There was a candle and matches in the vestry, which my companion proceeded to bring. I waited expectant, and a little fearful, alone at the dark mouth of that unknown charnel-house. It was a relief when he came back, carrying the light, although I had now to brace myself to following him, step by step, down the narrow steep stairway leading into the vault. The curate held the light to guide me and extended a friendly hand, which was more comforting than holding by the rough masonry.

Raising the candle high, its rays showed two tiers of niches, in most of which lay oaken coffins, massive and iron-bound. Some



IT WAS A SMALL SKELETON!

THE LITTLE BLACK GHOST.

*Lon. Soc.—Christmas No. 1892.*

*To face page 101.*



were still covered with the remains of velvet palls. All were thickly coated with fine dust. The curate slowly turned the light full on each in the upper row in turn, by way of performing a duty to the dead in seeing all was decently in order. I looked on timidly, keeping rather close to his side. The vault was so reverently arranged and peaceful that my first shrinking sensation soon passed. Only a quiet awe still possessed us both, as now the light travelled lower to the second tier.

One by one, two more coffins were passed in review. Then—"Ah!" escaped me in a suppressed scream, while with quaking hands I caught my comrade's arm for support. My sharp outcry and clutch so startled him, he almost dropped the candle; but luckily his nerves were tougher than mine. We both stared with wide eyes, mine affrighted, at an object on the floor.

*It was a small skeleton!*

"Let us look closer; there is nothing to be afraid of," said the curate, trying to reassure me, but involuntarily whispering, he himself was so strongly impressed, "I will hold the candle lower if you don't mind. Why—it must have been a child!"

The tiny framework of bones was seated with its legs stretched towards us, the toes upturned. But the fleshless tiny arms were laid upon the end of a small coffin, one arm supporting the poor little skull. How piteously the latter seemed to look up at us through its empty eye-sockets. How tired—very tired—the attitude of that which had once been a merry, breathing, laughing child. It was so affecting that my lips quivered and tears came to my eyes.

"Oh, see! it must have gone to sleep and then died all alone here. Can it have got shut in, or found its way by chance, and no one could hear its calls for help?"

"It has been no crime, that is certain; there is no sign of concealment. Stay. Is that a wreath from the coffin which has slipped over its head?"

Holding the candle close, we both bent forward to examine the dull, leaden-coloured object. An exclamation burst simultaneously from our lips. At the same instant, perhaps stirred by some draught caused by our sudden motion, the tiny skeleton collapsed, crumbling into a few bones at our feet. The supposed wreath rolled with a heavy sound on the floor, setting all doubts at rest. It was a massive silver collar.

"My *dear*, little, black page. So this was the end of you. No wonder the bellman cried you in vain. What brought you here?"

"What, indeed? See, that is a child's coffin he was laying his head upon. Can it have been that of his master?"

Cautiously we peered at the plate on the coffin lid. True enough, it bore the inscription:

Sir Gervaise Dene, Bart.  
b. 1748; d. 1758.



And, on looking closer, we found fragments of a once crimson stuff on the brick flooring.

That is all to be said. All the rest is pure conjecture. Our wonderment, and the amazement of others called in to verify this strange sight, could go no further than that the little negro page had stolen in hither, or stayed unmarked by the departing train to be near the remains of his young master. So, overcome by grief, or sleep, perchance both, the heavy slab overhead must have shut him out from the glad green world above, with its cheerful sounds and smiling sunshine. Had he suffered? Who can say? But let us hope that darkness, cold, and faintness of hunger soon so numbed his senses that insensibility stole over them with almost blissful languor.

We two, at least, who alone saw the fond posture, like that of a faithful dog, of that small skeleton sentinel, the embracing arms, the restful droop of the skull laid down above the feet of little Sir Gervaise, could not doubt that no fears or pain assailed soul and body in the end. Love strong in death had prevailed. Poor, nameless, negro child! He had lost surely his best friend. Perhaps he had found none other since the black waif was brought to our northern shores from the warm West Indian island he dimly remembered, with its palms and sugar canes, and the endearments of a dark woman who used to cuddle him in her arms.

There is little more to tell. The bones of the former black page were placed in a proper receptacle, with an inscription by the curate, who read over them a short service, which my relations and I with the sexton attended. They were then left beside Sir Gervaise's coffin, that in death these two might not be divided. Then the vault was permanently closed.

After a fortnight came a letter from Mr. Dene, to whom Uncle Henry had written an account of the strange discovery. He was considerably interested, and wished the silver collar kept for him as a family relic, which wish had been foreseen by us. All he had ever heard on the subject was, he wrote, that little Sir Gervaise was tossed by a cow in the park and died from his injuries. His mother, said by tradition to have been a passionate and harsh woman, never recovered the loss of her child, almost losing her wits from brooding over this grief and her dispossession from Old Court. She lived a hermit's life for some years at a dower house, and went by the name of the crazy Lady Dene. Lastly, he believed the bedroom with the turret recess used to be called Sir Gervaise's room.

This very room was the one I slept in at Old Court. And it may also be remembered that I arrived there on a May evening ; the same month in which, more than a century before, the child baronet died.

Adieu, my dear little apparition, with thy coal-black child's visage. I wonder will ever any other eyes than mine see thy shadowy form watching by that bedside again.

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## "The Mystery of Castle Crome."

I CANNOT attempt to explain the incident in this story. I will only relate it just as it occurred.

\* \* \* \* \*

I shall never forget the winter of 1880.

In that year my sister Grace and I were invited to spend Christmas and New Year with some friends who had recently bought a fine old place in Devonshire.

We were wild with delight at the thought of at last being able to see a little of the world.

My father was a country rector, with a large family of children, so, what with his ever decreasing tithes, and ever increasing family, he had rather a hard time of it.

The great puzzle with us all just then, was how to replenish our wardrobes for this wonderful visit.

Oh, the contrivance and self-denial, and patience that our dear mother and eldest sister displayed in getting us ready!

A vision comes before me now, as I write, of our long, low school-room, a bright fire burning in the grate, and the cold December sunshine shining on our heap of finery on the table, and brightening the fair sweetness of my mother and Maud's face. So alike they were!

Grace and I were helping also, but not in the deft, clever way the others manifested.

"We must be quick," said my mother. "The dinner bell will soon ring and father must not see us untidy, nor unpunctual, because of your little dissipation," and she looked fondly at us.

Just then one of the boys came sauntering in from the Grammar School near by.

"What do you call this thing?" said Jack, picking up a piece of tulle from the table; and then, throwing it over his curly head, he marched round the room, shouting, "This is how Grace means to wear it; only hold your noddle straight, miss, or it is safe to come off."

Up jumped Grace and flew after him, and in the midst of the confusion that ensued, mother was called away; and Hal came briskly in.

"What's in the wind now?" he asked. "Jack into mischief, as usual," and picking him up by the scruff of the neck as if he had been a puppy, he ignominiously expelled him from the room.

Then setting his back against the door, our tall, strong brother, shaking his head very solemnly at us, thus proceeded:

"I have a duty to perform which grieves me, but you know I never shrink from duties. *Girls*, this Castle Crome visit will turn out badly; you had better give it up. I have been looking over some old records and I find the blessed old place is haunted."

"Haunted!" we screamed in one breath, and Grace looked scared.

"Yes, *haunted*, and in a peculiarly horrible manner. Some hundreds of years ago, in one of the wings of the old castle, two lovely sisters were murdered in the night, and when their room was entered in the morning they were found lying side by side, stiff and straight for burial, with no mark to tell of the foul deed, save a dark bruise on one fair girl's forehead. I am giving it to you chapter and verse."

"Hal," said Maud, gravely, "how can you? It is going too far—it is quite wicked. Suppose either of the little ones had been here?"

"Well, suppose they had? Then I should have shut up," said Hal, quite crossly for him. "All I have been saying is true and you can read it for yourselves."

At that minute the first dinner bell rang, and we all scuttled away to get tidy ourselves and help the little ones, but, through and above all the happy buzz of our pleasant home life, I felt the chill of Hal's words.

We had never been allowed to hear any ghost stories, and this weird tale of Hal's fastened itself on my memory.

About a week after this, in a wild and stormy evening, the driving mist shutting out the glorious Devonshire scenery, our train steamed into Castle Crome station.

We stepped out of the carriage, cramped and tired with our long journey, and with no one to meet us.

With some heart-sinking we collected our luggage, and went into the station, there to wait for what might betide.

In the waiting room was the dearest and rosiest of old ladies. Her sweet blue eyes clouded over with real sympathy when she heard of our plight.

"Castle Crome! dear me! that is some distance from here—a fine old place on the sea shore; I know it well."

"Do you, indeed? Is it then haunted?" I asked, something seeming to impel me to speak.

"Yes," she answered, nodding her head wisely. "It is said to be, and none of the village folk will go there after dark."

"What are they supposed to see?" I asked in a low tone.

"Only the old Squire Crome—the late squire—riding slowly round the carriage drive on his old grey cob."

"What rubbish!" I exclaimed. "Is there not a story about two girls having been murdered there years ago?"

"Not that I ever heard of," she said, looking puzzled.

At that instant there came a sound of prancing steeds, and a carriage and pair came into view, dashing up to the station in fine style.

Out of it sprang, all in the drizzling rain, a fair-haired, bright-faced girl whom we well knew, our own especial friend, Dolly Portal.

"Oh, you poor darlings!" she exclaimed, flying into the station with outstretched hands. "Cold and tired and hungry, that's what you are—and no one to meet you! I made a mistake in the time; please forgive me."

"Come along," she went on, scarcely waiting for us to take a cordial leave of the old lady. "Come along. I have a basket of good things in the carriage, as we don't dine till late; and as we go along I will tell you all the fun. We have a houseful of visitors, and are to have a dance early in the New Year."

All our shyness and fatigue melted away at sight of our friend, and on hearing her gay prattle, and we were all chatting merrily together when—after rather a long drive—we drew up at the great entrance of the castle.

It was indeed a grand pile of buildings, flanked by two massive wings. I could not help wondering what the dead and gone Cromes would have thought, could they ever have guessed that their fine old castle would, one day, pass into a *wine merchant's* hands. However, "such is life."

There was a circular sweep in front of the hall door, which

opened out into a drive at the side, leading through a small park. The other side of the castle looked straight out over the sea, and we could hear the hoarse music of the waves as they dashed against the cliffs, or swished into the caves close by.

"This is a glorious old place," said Grace, springing lightly out of the carriage; "how we shall enjoy ourselves, Nancy," and, without waiting for an answer, she sped lightly up the steps by the side of Dolly, while I followed more slowly.

In the moment that we were waiting for the great door to unclose, the watery moon came out from a great bank of clouds, and I glanced curiously at the circular drive.

Certainly, there was no sign to-night of old Squire Crome and his old grey cob; and at that minute the door unclosed, and such a burst of glad welcome met us, that effectually drove all thought of ghost and goblin out of my head.

Indeed, as the days passed on, the atmosphere of the house was so full of light-hearted, innocent gaiety, that there was no time for a single gloomy thought.

The old place was exquisitely and brightly furnished, and decorated—in an old style indeed—to be in harmony with the building, but every object around was so beautiful, that the eye was unconsciously soothed and rested.

Our bedroom was particularly charming, with a small dressing-room adjoining, and I must confess that each night when I retired to rest, I was too happily tired, and my head too full of delightful plans for the morrow, to have a single thought to spare for Hal's ghost story.

There was a certain Dr. Anderson amongst the company—a rich man, and very high in his profession, who seemed—yes, I do think he was really taken with our bonny Grace—and I noticed day by day how her sweet shy eyes grew brighter, and the rose tint on her cheek deepened, as he showed ever-increasing interest in her, and she unfolded silently to his influence like some sweet perfumed flower.

\* \* \* \* \*

The night of the dance at length arrived, and the house was crammed with guests.

Mrs. Portal asked us if we would mind giving up our bedroom



to Colonel and Mrs. Saxby, and take one in another wing, equally pretty, but without a dressing-room.

Of course we gladly complied, and indeed the new chamber was even prettier than the last, only it was a panelled room, and in what was called the turret wing.

This building, we afterwards found, was the only part of the very old castle remaining, and had no connection with the two front wings.

I shall never forget how carefully we dressed for that dance, decking our plain white dresses with real flowers and ivy; and certainly in Grace the effect was charming.

What a delightful evening it was! Plenty of partners, and everybody kind and good-natured.

I was so taken up sometimes in watching Dr. Anderson and Grace, that I was almost in danger of forgetting my share in the evening's festivities.

As I was standing for a minute alone, by a gigantic palm, and with a swelling heart, listening to the murmur of admiration that Grace's exceeding loveliness called forth, I was almost startled by a little tap on my arm, and looking round encountered the amused eyes of a tall, dark stranger.

"Day dreams in a ball-room!" he said in quick, decisive tones. "I am sorry to disperse them, but I *must* dance, and I should like to dance with you. Not engaged? Ah! that is well. You are Anne Stratten," he went on, "and I am Jack Portal, bronzed and changed no doubt by long travels, but still the same Jack as of old. And little Anne, I should have known you anywhere. Do you remember I used to call you Nancy, and, I am sorry to say, sometimes *Nan*?"

"Yes, indeed," I said, "and how cross I used to be; but I am very glad you are come back."

"That is just what I wanted to know," he said quietly. "Now we will dance."

I felt it only wanted Jack Portal's arrival to make this evening the most perfect of my life.

A little before supper, Captain Cameron, with whom I had been dancing, accidentally trod upon my dress and tore it, at least a yard. What would Maud say? This famous dress to be spoiled in one night's wear!

Then a happy thought struck me. I would slip out, fly up-

stairs, mend it, and be back again before the supper dance, for was I not to dance that with Jack? Seizing my opportunity, I flew out into the brilliantly-lighted hall, and up the grand staircase. It rises before me now as I write—the splendidly carved staircase, the statues holding soft bright lights, the flowers, and palms and ferns—I see it all, and feel the perfumed air.

I sped gaily along the grand corridor, and then turned into one narrower, in order to reach the lofty arch draped with scarlet that led into the turret wing.

Soon after I had turned into the second corridor, I thought I heard footsteps following me. Was it Grace, or some servant? I turned carelessly round, and saw standing a few paces from me a dark, evil-faced woman, dressed in the strangest costume. The light shone full upon her face, and brought out every line and expression. She was looking fixedly at me in a very strange manner. My heart beat very fast, but steadying myself I said in a husky voice:

"What do you want?"

No answer. Only the dreadful gaze from those fierce eyes. I felt thoroughly frightened then, and like a very child, throwing my torn skirt over my arm, I rushed along the corridor with a speed that I knew a heavy woman like that could never compass.

But for all that, she was close behind me, and the instant I turned under the archway into the turret wing, she was close beside me, and in another minute we were standing looking into each other's faces. By no wish of mine, you may be very sure; but I seemed under a spell, and not able to move.

Her black eyes, fastened on my face, seemed gradually curdling my blood and turning me to stone. I could neither move nor speak. She was holding me as truly as by heavy cords, but they were *invisible* cords, I felt no bodily touch nor coercion. It was a wicked *spiritual* influence.

I felt too despairing even to hope for rescue; it seemed as if this would go on eternally, and that I was bound to her for ever and for ever.

Then all at once, above the hopeless anguish of my mind, a blessed name was borne in upon my thoughts. The very idea seemed to give me power to open my lips, and in a voice not like my own, I said:

"In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, release me."

That very instant, as surely as I write, the invisible bonds snapped asunder, I was free as air, and the woman had disappeared.

When I came to myself, some time after, I was lying on a sofa in the housekeeper's sitting-room, and she was pouring some cordial down my throat.

"One of the maids found you fainting in the corridor, miss, and brought you here. You are over-tired no doubt."

Then I sat up and remembered all, and a violent fit of shuddering came over me.

"I will ask Dr. Anderson to look at you," said Mrs. Parker with much concern.

"No, no," I said. "Only let my sister and Mrs. Portal know that I am all right, only tired, and I will wait here for Grace."

"Will you go to your own room?" said kind Mrs. Parker. "There is sure to be a nice fire, and I will send you some refreshments."

Pass through that dreadful corridor and under that archway without Grace! No, never!

I looked round the bright little room.

"Oh! let me stay if I am not in your way," I said, and so it was settled.

I had many visitors, as I feared.

Dr. Anderson lightly felt my pulse and with a curious glance said:

"Quiet is all she needs. Come along, we must clear the room."

He was obeyed, Grace and Dolly only stopping behind a moment, to kiss and fondle me, and express their sympathy.

Jack Portal once put his head in at the door and said:

"Come, come, this will never do, Miss Nancy. You promised me the supper dance, and you know you dance like a fairy."

I made him some laughing reply, and as the door closed Mrs. Parker said:

"He always did set such a store by you, Miss Anne; isn't it a blessing he has come home safe from foreign parts?"

Mrs. Parker was quite an old friend. She had been a kind of

upper nurse at the Portals' when we were all children. She loved all the Portals, but she adored Jack.

\* \* \* \* \*

About two hours later, Grace and I were seated before a glowing fire in our bedroom, in dressing gown and slippers, with our hair floating around us.

The bedroom was—as I have before said—a panelled room, and whatever was the prevailing tone in olden times, it was now a pale blue. It was a very pretty room indeed, and especially cheerful, and seemed such a happy refuge after my fright.

I breathed freely now the door was safely locked, the fire was burning brightly, and I had my Gracie.

She was full of gay chatter, and Dr. Anderson's name was often mentioned.

I glanced round the room again while she was talking, and noticed for the first time how exquisitely the bedstead was carved and that it was not modern. But the silken coverlet, the lace trimmed pillows, and our pretty bright sachets lying ready for us on either side of the bed, looked cosy and modern enough, and all my ghostly fears fled.

I drew my chair closer to the fire and put my feet upon the fender. So did Grace, and in this manner we were both sitting with our back to the bed.

"I will tell you all now, Gracie," I said, and then I told her all about my terrible fright in the corridor.

Grace grew pale as I concluded, but she rested her cheek caressingly on my shoulder and said :

"All imagination, Nannie; you were over-excited and tired."

"You are welcome to think so," I said, "and we won't discuss the subject; but to me it seems to bring honour to 'the name that is above every name.'"

"Yes," she softly said, and then we remained a long time silent, her head resting on my shoulder and her long golden hair falling like a shower over my dressing gown. The brush had fallen from her hand, and I noticed the curious effect in the firelight of the mingling of my dark hair with her bright tresses.

No sound broke the happy stillness of the room, except the

low sighing of the flames, and outside the dashing of the waves against the cliffs and the tapping of ivy leaves against the window panes.

Presently, with a happy sigh, Grace sat up, such a light in her eye, and rose tint on her cheek.

"Nancy, we must go to bed," she said. "Dr. Anderson is going to teach me a new figure on the ice to-morrow, and I do *love* skating," and she turned, as if towards the bed.

"*This* morning you mean, darling," I said, slowly rising to follow her.

I heard then an inarticulate sound from Grace, and turning sharply towards her, I saw a sight which froze my blood.

Grace stood quite upright and rigid, every trace of colour had fled, and her long bright hair fell over her blue dressing-gown like a glory.

Her face looked to me just like the face of a statue, except that her lips were parted, her hands extended, and her eyes dilated with an unspeakable horror. I followed the direction of this horrified gaze and *saw*—— But how can I describe it? Gone from the bed were the silken coverlets, the lace, the fripperies! Gone were our bright new sachets, all gone!

Instead, the bed was heavily draped with dark green velvet and antique fringe, and lying side by side in *our bed*, stiff, straight and dead, were two lovely young girls, pure-looking and placid, only there was an ugly blue mark on the temple of one.

I do think the shock of this sight would have *killed* me only there was Grace to be thought of. I flew to her; I could not speak, my mouth was parched and dry, but I tried to drag her to the door, she *ever* resisting, though faintly, and *ever* keeping her awful gaze fixed upon the bed.

How I unlocked the door and got her into Dolly's room I could never after tell, but we did get there at last, and Dolly, sitting up shivering in bed, saw, by her dying firelight, a sight she could never after forget.

Grace, standing upright and rigid in the middle of the room, her affrighted eyes wildly dilated and uttering a succession of the most fearful shrieks that could ever have fallen from human lips.

Soon the room was in a hubbub. The only distinct sound I heard after was Dr. Anderson saying in a deeply moved voice:

"She must have had some frightful shock; leave her to me and Mrs. Portal."

I remember nothing more, and it was some days before I recovered full consciousness.

When I did, my mother was bending over me, and that was consolation indeed.

After that, she never left Grace night nor day.

It was a weary, anxious time that followed.

A great doctor came down from London in consultation with Dr. Anderson and they both thought Grace would die. Even if her life were spared, they agreed she would lose her senses.

Imagine therefore my thankfulness when, one evening as I was sitting in a low chair by the side of her bed, looking—oh, so anxiously at her dear wan face, she suddenly unclosed her eyes, and looking at me quite sensibly, said, in the faintest of faint tones:

"I remember it all. Nan, did you see them? Ah, I see you did. Poor girls! They could not harm us!"

"No indeed, darling," I answered soothingly, and giving her some beef tea, told her to go to sleep, which she did, and from that time recovered rapidly.

The full particulars of that night were told to very few people, and *they* seemed a little sceptical about the "appearances."

"At any rate," said kind, motherly Mrs. Portal, "there shall be no shadow on the brightness of this dear old place. Father wants a fresh gallery for his new pictures, so we will have a heavy oaken door where the archway now is, and shut off the whole of the turret wing. Father can have that for his pictures."

This was done, and many times in after years I have wandered by daylight, quite alone, all over the turret wing looking at the pictures.

The buying of pictures was Mr. Portal's great hobby, and a very expensive one he found it. However, he was immensely rich, and no doubt got taken in over and over again.

• • • • •

Many years have passed away.

My sister Grace has long since married Dr. Anderson, and a very happy match it has proved.

I am engaged to Jack Portal, and Jack sometimes asks me what I think the pictures see at midnight, in the turret wing.

This I know of a surety, if I were to go there at midnight, footsteps would follow me, a dark, evil-faced woman would try to enthrall me, and in the blackest of black nights an unearthly light would ever show up the two murdered girls in their antique bed under the heavy canopy.

The portraits stare stonily night after night on strange scenes in the turret wing, but—like the dead—they tell no tales.

SARAH CATHERINE BUDD.

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## Ritter Gluck.

A REMEMBRANCE OF THE YEAR 1809.

By E. T. A. HOFFMANN.

Translated by C. ALICE ELGAR.

A FEW beautiful days generally occur in Berlin, even in the late autumn. The sun emerges cheerfully from the clouds and the dampness soon dries in the mild air which breathes through the streets. Then a long procession may be seen—fashionable people, burghers with their wives and dear little ones in Sunday clothes, clerics, Jewesses, lawyers, professors, milliners, dancers, officers and others, all thronging together, going to the Thiergarten. Every seat at Klau's and Weber's is soon occupied, the coffee steams, the young men of fashion light their cigars, every one talks at once—argues about war and peace or discusses Mdle. Bethmann's shoes, whether she wore grey or green ones lately, the narrowed state of trade and bad coppers, &c., &c., &c., till all is lost in the strains of an air from Fanchon, with which a harp, woefully out of tune, a couple of fiddles not tuned at all, a consumptive flute, and a spasmodic bassoon are torturing themselves and their hearers. Close to the railing which separates the Weber domain from the high road stand many little round tables and garden chairs ; here you can breathe the fresh air and observe the comers and goers at a safe distance from the cacophonish uproar of that accursed orchestra. That is where I seat myself, giving rein to the airy play of fancy, which brings me friendly figures with whom I converse concerning science, art and everything which should be dearest to the mind of man. Ever gayer and gayer grows the stream of pedestrians passing by me, but nothing disturbs me, and nothing can scare away my fantastic company. Only the atrocious trio of a very commonplace waltz roused me from my world of dreams. I could hear nothing but the squeaking treble of the violins and flutes and the snorting of the bassoon ; they went up and down, keeping tight hold of one another in octaves, torturing the ear, and involuntarily, like a man seized with acute pain, I cried out :

“What maddening music! the abominable octaves!” Close to me came a whisper :

"Cruel fate! another octave hunter again, so soon."

I looked up, and suddenly became aware of a man who had taken a seat at the same table as myself, and who was gazing fixedly at me. He at once held me spellbound. I never saw a head or figure which made such a rapid and deep impression on me. Imagine a slightly aquiline nose, a broad open forehead standing out in a remarkable manner, bushy greyish brows, beneath which shone out eyes sparkling with almost wild, youthful fire (their possessor must have been over 50). The gentle outline of the chin contrasted strangely with the compressed lips, and a satirical play of the muscles in his sunken cheeks seemed in direct contradiction to the earnest and deep melancholy which rested on his brow. Only a few scanty grey locks lay behind large ears standing out from his head. A very ample overcoat of modern cut enwrapped the tall meagre figure. As my glance met his he lowered his eyes, and with visible satisfaction continued his occupation, which my exclamation had apparently interrupted. He was busily shaking some tobacco out of various small packets into a large box placed before him, and damping it with red wine out of a quarter bottle. The music had ceased and I felt compelled to address him.

"It is a mercy that the music has stopped," I said, "it was unendurable."

The old man cast a hasty glance at me, and shook out his last packet.

"It would be better if they did not play at all," I continued. "Do you not agree with me?"

"I have no opinion," he said. "You are a musician and a connoisseur by profession."

"You are mistaken; I am neither. I once learnt the piano and thorough-bass as subjects appertaining to a polite education, and I was told, amongst other things, that nothing had a worse effect than when the bass progressed in octaves with the upper part. I received this on authority at the time, and have always found the rule justified."

"Really?" he rejoined, then rose and walked slowly and thoughtfully towards the musicians, whom he treated with commanding dignity. He came back, and had hardly seated himself when they began to play the overture to "Iphigenia in Aulis."

With eyes half closed, and leaning his slender arms on the

table, he listened to the *andante* ; moving his left foot slightly, he marked the entry of each part ; then raising his head he glanced hastily around—his left hand with its outstretched fingers rested on the table as if in the act of striking a chord on the piano, he lifted his right hand : I thought I saw before me a Capellmeister giving the entry of the new *tempo* to the orchestra—the right hand falls and the *allegro* begins ; a burning flush flies across the pale cheeks, the eyebrows are knit together with a frown, an inward rage lights the wild glance with a fire which consumes more and more the smile still hovering round the half-parted lips. Now he leans back, the eyebrows are gradually elevated, the play of the muscles in his cheeks returns, the eyes shine, a deep inward pain melts into enjoyment, which penetrates every fibre, and vibrates convulsively through his frame—he draws a deep breath, drops of perspiration stand on his forehead, he marks the entrance of the *tutti* and other principal points ; his right hand beats time without stopping, in his left he holds his handkerchief, and passes it over his face. Thus he succeeds in clothing the skeleton of the overture presented by that handful of violins with flesh and colour. I heard the soft melting lament with which the flute ascends when the storm of the violins and basses has exhausted itself and the thunder of the drums is silent ; I heard the softly suggested tones of the violoncellos and bassoons, which fill the heart with unspeakable melancholy. The *tutti* returns, the unison strides on, noble and great as a giant, the toneless lament dies out beneath its crushing tread.

The overture was ended ; the stranger let both his arms sink down, and sat there with closed eyes, like one exhausted by too great an effort. His bottle was empty ; I filled his glass with burgundy, which I had ordered meanwhile. He sighed deeply as if awakening from a dream. I obliged him to drink, which he did without making any excuses, and emptying the full glass in one draught he exclaimed :

“I am satisfied with the performance. The orchestra got through bravely.”

“But yet,” I replied, “they gave but a feeble sketch of a masterpiece painted in vivid colours.”

“Judge I rightly ? you do not belong to Berlin ?”

“You are right ; I only stay here occasionally.”

“The burgundy is good ; but it is getting cold.”

"Yes, let us go inside and finish the bottle there."

"A good idea. I do not know you, neither do you know me. We will not ask each other's names; names are sometimes burdensome. I drink burgundy, it costs me nothing, we are enjoying each other's society, so let well alone."

He said all this with hearty good-nature. We entered the room. When seated, he threw open his overcoat, and I remarked with surprise that under it he wore an embroidered waistcoat with long flaps, black velvet breeches, and a very small silver sword. He buttoned up his coat again carefully.

"Why did you ask me if I belonged to Berlin?" I began.

"Because in that case I should have had to leave you."

"That sounds enigmatical."

"Not in the least when I tell you that I—well, am a composer."

"I do not understand you any the more."

"Pardon me, then, for my exclamation of a few minutes ago, as I see you know nothing of Berlin or its inhabitants."

He stood up and walked hastily to and fro a few times, then stepped to the window and sang almost inaudibly the chorus of the priestesses from "Iphigenia in Tauris," tapping the window-pane now and again at the entry of the *tutti*. I remarked with astonishment and admiration that he gave certain varied turns to the melodies which were striking in their force and novelty. I let him go on. He finished and returned to his seat. Quite penetrated by the man's strange behaviour and the fantastic expressions of rare musical talent, I was silent. After a time he began:

"Have you ever composed?"

"Yes; I have experimented in the art; but I found everything I wrote in moments of imagined inspiration seemed afterwards tame and dull; so I let it alone."

"You were wrong in doing that, for to make the attempt is no bad sign of talent. One learns music as a boy, because father and mother insist upon it; one goes on thumping and squeaking: but unconsciously the mind grows more receptive of melody. The half-forgotten theme of a little song now sung differently was perhaps one's first original thought, and this embryo, painfully nourished by outside forces, develops into a giant who devours all around him and assimilates everything into his own

blood and marrow! Ha! how is it possible even to point out the thousand ways by which one arrives at composing? It is a broad high road; all tramp along it and shout and shriek: We are the consecrated ones! We reach the goal! Through the ivory gate we reach the kingdom of dreams: few even see the doors, still fewer pass its portals. Strangely mysterious is the aspect here. Wild figures wave hither and thither, they have all a character of their own—some more marked than others. They do not allow themselves to be seen on the public road; they are only to be found inside the ivory gate. It is difficult to escape from this kingdom, monsters bar the way, as they did that to the palace of Alcinous. Every one rushes—as in a whirlwind revolving round and round—many dream out the dream in the realm of dreams—they exhale themselves in dreams—they cast a shadow no more, otherwise they would be conscious of it in the gleam which pierces athwart this kingdom; but only a few, awakened from their imaginings, mount upwards and stride through the land of dreams—they reach truth—the highest moment is touched, the contact with the eternal, unspeakable! Look at the sun: it is the triad, out of which the harmonies, like the stars, shoot down and encompass you round with threads of fire. You lie there in a chrysalis of flame till Psyche mounts with spreading wings into the sun ——”

He had sprung to his feet during these last words and raised his hand, gazing upwards. Then he sat down again and quickly emptied the glass filled for him. A silence ensued which I dare not break, fearing to disturb the flight of this extraordinary man's thoughts. At length he continued more quietly:

“When I dwelt in the realm of dreams, I was tortured by a thousand sorrows and fears! It was night and I was terrified by the grinning masks of the monsters who stormed against me and who now made me sink down in the abyss of the sea, and now carried me high up in the air. Rays of light passed through the darkness and became tones which surrounded me with delicious brightness. I awoke from my pains and saw a great clear Eye which gazed at an organ, and as it gazed, tones arose and glimmered and embraced each other in glorious chords, such as I should never have imagined. Melodies streamed up and down, and I swam with this stream and was nigh to destruction, when the Eye gazed at me and held me



above the raging waves. Night returned, then two Colossi in shining armour advanced towards me: Tonic and Dominant! They tore me upwards, but the Eye smiled, saying: 'I know what fills thy breast with longing; the gentle, tender stripling, the Third, shall step out between the Colossi: thou shalt hear his sweet voice, thou shalt see me again and my melodies shall be thine.'"

He ceased.

"And you saw the Eye again?"

"Yes, I saw it again. I sighed out long years in the region of dreams—there—yes, there! I sat in a glorious valley and listened to the flowers singing to one another. Only one sunflower was silent and bowed its closed chalice sadly to the ground. Invisible hands drew me towards it; it raised its head. The blossom opened, and from its midst the Eye shone out. Now the tones expanded like beams of light from my brain to the flowers, who drank them in greedily. Larger and larger grew the sunflower's petals—burning rays streamed from them—they flowed around me—the Eye had disappeared together with I, myself, into the chalice of the flower."

With these last words he sprang up and hurried out of the room with hasty, almost youthful steps. I waited in vain for his return, and at last determined to go back into the town.

I had nearly reached the Brandenburg Gate when I saw a tall form striding through the darkness and at once recognized my eccentric friend. I addressed him with:

"Why did you leave me so hastily?"

"It was too hot and the *euphonia* began to sound."

"I do not understand!"

"So much the better."

"So much the worse; I should like to understand you thoroughly."

"Do you not hear anything?"

"No."

"It is past; let us go. I do not generally like society; but—you do not compose—you do not belong to Berlin."

"I cannot imagine why you are so prejudiced against Berlin people. Here, where art is appreciated and practised in such a high degree, I should have thought a man with your artistic mind might feel in a very congenial sphere."

"You are mistaken! To my torment I am condemned to wander around here in desolate space like a lost spirit."

"In desolate space, here, in Berlin?"

"Yes, desolation surrounds me, for no sympathetic spirit approaches me. I stand alone."

"But the artists! the composers!"

"Away with them! They criticize and criticize—pare everything down to the finest reducible measure; they turn over everything in their brains in order to find even one wretched thought; with all their chattering about art and an artistic mind, and I know not what besides, they stop short of creation, and if they imagine they have succeeded in dragging a few ideas into the light of day, then the terrible cold shows how vastly distant they are from the sun—it is work worthy of the Lapps."

"Your verdict appears to me much too harsh. At any rate, the magnificent performances in the theatre must satisfy you."

"I forced myself to go once to the theatre to hear my young friend's opera—What is it called, by the way?—Ha, the whole world is contained in that opera! Through the gay crowd of bedizened human beings pass the Spirits of Orcus. Here all is tone and mighty sound—the devil—I mean of course Don Giovanni! But I could not endure staying to the end of the overture, which was dashed off *prestissimo* without soul or understanding; and yet I had prepared myself to hear it with prayer and fasting, because I know the *euphonia* grows much too emotional amongst these masses of people and its voice becomes impure!"

"If I must admit that Mozart's masterpieces are neglected here in an almost inexplicable manner, Gluck's works, on the contrary, enjoy a worthy representation."

"Do you think so? I once wished to hear 'Iphigenia in Tauris.' As I entered the theatre I heard them beginning the overture to 'Iphigenia in Aulis.' H'm, I thought to myself, I have made a mistake; they are giving *this* Iphigenia! I was amazed, when lo! the *andante* with which the 'Iphigenia in Tauris' opens, followed by the storm, commenced. Twenty years lie between the two! The whole effect, the thoughtfully balanced exposition of the tragedy, was lost. A calm sea, the Greeks landed, there is the opera! How? Did the composer write the overture at random so that it can be puffed off like a little piece for trumpets where and when you will?"

"I acknowledge the mistake. Nevertheless they do all they can to glorify Gluck's works."

"Ah, indeed!" he said curtly, and smiled still more bitterly. Suddenly he started up and nothing could hold him longer. He vanished as it were in a moment, and for many days I sought him in vain in the Thiergarten.

Some months passed, when finding myself belated one cold rainy evening in a distant quarter of the town, I was hastening towards my home in the Friedrichstrasse. I had to pass the theatre; the full sounding music, trumpets and drums, reminded me that Gluck's "Armida" was just being given, and I was on the point of going in, when a singular monologue close to the windows, through which almost every tone of the orchestra could be heard, aroused my attention.

"Now comes the king—they are playing the march—O blow, trumpets, blow away!—that is very good! Yes, yes, they will have to play it eleven times to-day—else the procession will not be able to complete its march. Ha, ha—*maestoso*—step out, my children. See, there stops a figurante with a shoe-strap hanging loose. Just so, twelve times! and always blowing away on the dominant. O ye everlasting powers, will that never stop? Now he pays his compliment—Armida offers most humble thanks. What again? Just so, two soldiers are still behind! Now the recitative stumbles into the midst of it. What evil spirit keeps me rooted here?"

"The spell is broken," I cried. "Come!" I seized hold of my eccentric friend from the Thiergarten—for the individual talking to himself was no other—by the arm and dragged him away with me. He seemed surprised, and followed me silently. We had already reached the Friedrichstrasse when he halted abruptly.

"I know you," he said. "You were at the Thiergarten. We talked a great deal, I drank wine, got excited, the *euphonia* sounded for two whole days afterwards. I had a great deal to endure; it is past!"

"I rejoice that accident has again led you to me. Let us become further acquainted. I live near here; how would it be if——"

"I may not, dare not, go to any one's house."

"No, you shall not escape me; I go to yours."

"Then you will have to run a few hundred steps farther with me. But you were going into the theatre?"



"I wanted to hear 'Armida,' but now——"

"You *shall* hear 'Armida' at once! Come."

We ascended the Friedrichstrasse in silence; he turned swiftly up a side street, I was hardly able to keep up with him, he raced on at such a pace, when at last he stopped in front of an unassuming house. He knocked for some time, at length the door was opened. Groping in the dark we found the stairs and reached a room on the upper floor, the door of which my guide closed carefully. I heard another door open; he soon came in with a light, and I was not a little surprised at the appearance of the curiously-furnished apartment: old-fashioned chairs richly ornamented, a tall clock in a gilded case, and a broad, massive mirror, lent an aspect of gloomy and superannuated splendour to the whole. In the middle of the room was a small piano, on which stood a large porcelain inkstand, and by its side lay a sheet of ruled paper. A closer glance at this apparatus for composing convinced me, however, that nothing could have been written for a long time, for the paper was completely yellowed and thick spiders' webs covered the inkstand. He stepped across to a press in the corner of the room which I had not yet noticed, and when he drew back the curtain I beheld a row of beautifully bound books with titles in gold lettering: "Orfeo," "Armida," "Alceste," "Iphigenia," and others; in short I saw Gluck's masterpieces complete.

"You have the whole of Gluck's works," I exclaimed.

He did not answer, but his lips quivered with a convulsive smile, and the play of the muscles in his sunken cheeks transformed his face in an instant into a terrible mask. With his gloomy eyes fixed on me, he seized one of the books—it was "Armida"—and stepped solemnly to the piano. I opened it hastily and raised the folded desk; he seemed pleased. He threw open the book, and—who could picture my surprise? I beheld ruled leaves, but not a single note was written on them.

He began: "Now I will play the overture. You must turn the leaves and at the right moment." I promised, and he played the majestic *tempo di marcia* with which the overture commences almost note for note like the original in a glorious, masterly manner with full chords. The *allegro*, however, was only tinged throughout with Gluck's principal themes. He imported into it so many genial modifications that my amazement increased every moment. His modulations were especially striking without being

harsh, and he knew how to weave so many *melismata* around the simple leading thoughts, that they seemed to reappear in ever fresh and rejuvenated forms. His face glowed, his eyebrows soon knit themselves together and a long-stifled anger threatened to burst forth in all its fury, then his eyes grew wet with tears of deep emotion. Now and again he sang the theme in a sympathetic tenor voice whilst both hands were working out artistic *melismata*; then he succeeded in a most peculiar way in imitating with his voice the hollow sound of the drums. I turned the leaves diligently, following the direction of his eyes. The overture ended, and he sank back in his arm-chair exhausted and with closed eyes. He soon roused himself again, however, and hastily turning over several of the blank leaves of the book, said in a hushed voice:

“All this, sir, I wrote when I came from the kingdom of dreams. But I revealed what was holy to the profane and an ice-cold hand seized this glowing heart. It did not break, but I was condemned to wander amongst the unholy like a departed spirit—without form, so that no one might recognize me, until the sunflower lifts me up again to the Eternal. Ha! Now let us sing Armida’s scena.”

Then he sang the closing scene from “Armida” with an expression which penetrated my very soul. Here also he departed considerably from the true original, but his altered music was Gluck’s own scena in heightened power. Everything that hate, love, despair, madness can express in strongest utterance, he depicted in the most forcible tones. His voice seemed to be that of a youth, swelling out from deep hollowness to penetrating strength. Every fibre quivered within me—I felt beside myself. When he stopped, I threw myself into his arms, and cried with choking voice: “What is this? Who are you?”

He stood up and measured me with an earnest penetrating gaze; but before I could ask anything more he had escaped with the light and left me in the dark. Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed, I despaired of seeing him again, and, guiding myself by the position of the piano, tried to open the doors, when he suddenly entered, bearing the light in his hand and dressed in an embroidered gala suit, a rich vest, his sword at his side.

I stood transfixed; he approached me solemnly, and taking my hand gently, said with a strange smile:

“I AM THE RITTER GLUCK!”

## In Exchange.

By the Author of "MISS MOLLY."

THE red sun had sunk out of sight ; had disappeared in a flame of gold behind the golden cornfields, and slowly above the mysterious mountain heights which frowned overhead, above the straight sad pines with their mournful song, the moon now stole through the clouds, silvering a path through the dark pines to the crags above, showing by that silver line the road that led to where the Dark Witch dwelt.

The lady looked shudderingly around when the silver path ended in that desolate, still darkness, but her courage did not fail. Was it not here that she was destined to leave the burden she had borne so long ?

"Dark Witch," she called softly—loudly.

And then started as if in alarm when the expected form drew near—when the expected voice answered :

"Who calls ?"

It was not exactly such a witch that the lady had expected or feared. This woman, beautiful and young, with eyes dark as some still hidden mountain tarn where a passing storm has left a dream or a memory ; with raven hair silvered in the moonlight—moonlight which cast no shadow at her feet.

"Help me," the lady wailed. "It is to you they have bid me come ; for you, they tell me, will ease me of my aching, agonized heart."

She lowered her voice as if to hide her wish from the evening air, but it caught the words, for there came at once a mournful sigh from the sombre watching pines.

"Is the heart you offer"—the witch's voice was cold and calm—"a human heart weighed down with agony ? Does it ache and throb and beat at its bars like a captive bird ? Does it

agonize at a cruel word, as if it were a blow? Has it known the heights of transcendent joy before it broke at the loss?"

"It has known all sorrow," the lady cried, and the tears ran down her cheeks. "That I am young in years you would never guess; each beat of my heart has dug the grave where my youth and beauty sleep."

The lady's shadow, slim and tall, stretched to the feet of the witch, where they rested in naked whiteness, shadowless, on the rocky ground. She turned her eyes to the lady's tears, those eyes, that like a mountain tarn were dark with the secrets of life and death, and:

"The heart is one that I seek," she said. "I will buy it from you for one who needs it."

"And the price?" the lady cried. "Tell me that I may know. What shall I lose? It were well I should understand."

Her sorrowing eyes, her clinging hands, seemed to command the answer that the witch paused before she gave.

"For such a heart, so sorely do I need it, I will give you one in gold and amber. It will serve your purpose just as well. A heart of gold and amber does not ache and throb"—the lady smiled. "It will serve your body just as well—but your soul," and her voice faded away into the moonlight around, "will be within sight of hell."

But the lady did not heed or hear, for the cold white hands of the Dark Witch were soothing with their touch the agonized beats of the heart that had taught her so much; under the touch the pain was passing from her eyes, and the lines from her face, and she was buying something which she had never known. And in the peace the words of the Dark Witch were ceasing to bear any meaning.

"You will miss nothing," she said; "the world will be just the same—only sometimes you will hear a word that you will not be able to understand. I have told you the purchase price."

The lady walks the sunlit world, happy and gay and bright; no shadow from that forgotten night steals over her with unquiet pain. The golden heart serves its purpose well, its throbs bring no sharp torture, and her eyes have grown so young that they seem to be reflecting wells of light. All goes as happily as the Dark Witch foretold, and the murmur about her soul perhaps never reached her ears—and a soul keeps out of sight. But sometimes

as she stands where the evening breeze sighs through quiet dark pines, or where breakers flash and the gulls fly low with a warning cry, sometimes even when the world is smiling back an answer to her smiles, there steals to the golden jewelled heart a word she cannot understand, for the key of that word is buried in the sorrowing human heart which beats its throbs of pain, where the naked feet of the Dark Witch walk the world, no longer shadowless.

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## The Rose Garden.

“He has only lived a man’s life.”—*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.*

IT was a Garden held within an ivy’d wall,  
And girdled round with trees majestic and rare ;  
Full to the heart with Roses, golden, pale and red,  
And white with stately Lilies, till the very air  
Seem’d bow’d and heavy with a load too sweet to lift.  
And in the midst, half hidden by a babbling Fount,  
One single Tree was set, and nurtur’d tenderly  
By young May sunbeams, crooning winds, and crystal dew.  
She was a fair and fragile thing, that fain would creep  
Within the shade, to venture forth a virgin bud,  
And nest it in the cradle of her fresh green leaves.  
But with glad June the glory of the Roses came,  
And each calm night, when all the stars were in the sky,  
The Master of that Garden paced his fragrant realm.  
—A man whose dealings with the world had gain’d him gold,  
But scant contentment, and a sneer upon his soul.  
One evening, when the waning moon was at her last,  
He chanced to linger later than his wont, and stray’d  
To where the Tree in all her loveliness lean’d down  
To catch the Fountain’s whisper, and the whilst he gazed  
Some wand’ring wind came stealing thro’ her flutter’d leaves,  
And stirr’d the sweetness of her folded Rose beneath.  
—A dream of white divineness, touch’d about the heart  
With pinken blushes, like the first faint hues of dawn.  
Nearer he drew, and as the shadows fell more deep,  
A yearning spell came flaming up within his soul  
Like wreathing incense—and the trembling Tree in fear  
Looked up . . . to see her image in his grave deep eyes,  
And learn the secrets of unfathomable seas.

Too late ! . . . for he had pluck'd the Rose from off its stem  
And laid it in his heart, to make her pain more sweet.  
She was to him a dainty toy, while he to her  
Was God ! But Time and Man are traitors unto Love.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so her petals soon were paled, her sweetness spent,  
And from his heart he cast her out, then roam'd again  
Among the Roses—but the Tree droop'd down to die.  
Once more he saw her—on a soft and spangled night,  
—He had forgotten . . . and beside the Fountain's marge  
He stumbled on her agony, and saw her broke  
And crush'd to earth, but quiv'ring still to hear his tread.  
Then for one instant in his heart some angel stirr'd  
To breathe repentance, but he thrust its wings aside,  
And dash'd away the sweat that started to his brow.  
—Only an instant, then the Man within him woke  
To curse his folly, and with one half-smother'd sigh,  
He turn'd upon his heel ; and fleeing down the path,  
Plunged deep among the Lilies—to forget the Rose.

BARONESS DE BERTOUCHE.

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## The Curse of Mahendra.

A TALE OF SOUTHERN INDIA.

By RUSSELL SIDNEY.

"WELL, old fellow, so you're off at last! Good luck to you! May you bring back the biggest tusk of the rascaldest old rogue-elephant that ever burdened mother-earth."

"My blessing with you, Reid. Lucky dog! I only wish I had a chance of putting a ball into the monster's carcase. Great Scot! what wouldn't I give to be you, instead of sweltering here in this confounded hole."

"I wish with all my heart you could join me, Stewart; but cheer up, old fellow, your turn will come next," answered the subject of these vehement valedictions—a young civilian, tall, dark and well-knit together—as he passed quickly out of the mess-bungalow of the 91st M.N.I., followed by several men anxious to speed his departure on a shooting expedition among the jungles of the Western Ghats of Southern India.

"Look out, as it's your first elephant hunt, Reid. Remember what I told you; the brutes are ticklish sport. Aim right in the centre of the forehead with steady hand and clear head, about fifteen paces off if possible. Should you miss, put a ball in the hollow of the eye with your second barrel; if *that* misses, *sauve qui peut*. That's my last word of advice," quoth the major, the old *shikari* of the party. "You bring to mind my first shot——"

As the worthy man was deemed to be prolix over his well-known narratives, he was summarily interrupted by the discordant voices of several irreverent youngsters, giving their equally valuable hints and admonitions, mingled with many despairing groans at the irony of an indiscriminating fate, which doomed them to hateful musketry practice on the sultry plains.

Among the turmoil of voices, Reid was calmly superintending the bestowal of some few remaining traps and packages in the dark recesses of the bullock cart, and after some necessary directions to his boy, Rungiah, an olive-brown sinister-expressed Tamil, he himself finally disappeared into its mysterious depths.



With a last grip of the hand nearest to him, a hearty farewell cheer from the younger men, a series of unearthly sounds from the native driver, a flick of the huge whip, a twist to each of the bullocks' tails, as the lumbering vehicle crawled slowly out of the mess-compound, the young man at length set off on his night journey to the foot of the distant Western Ghauts, outlined clear and dark against the deep blue vault of the starry sky. The moon was just rising, and the vivid silver light fell on the rustling palmyra groves, the massive mango topes, the slender cocoa-nut palms, the broad expanse of paddy-fields and the yellow stretches of sand extending in a series of arid undulations to the mountain range. As he leant out of the door of his primitive conveyance, finishing his cheroot before finally composing himself for a few hours' sleep, Reid smiled to himself with a half-boyish grin of self-satisfaction, as he watched the fast disappearing lights of the little station of Manapatti. At last he was on the eve of the realization of one of his fondest dreams. At last he was to take part in an elephant hunt, and all the true British ardour for sport seemed to possess his soul.

Fortunate fellow! Gifford Reid was indeed what may be termed lucky; he had very little to complain of, very few wishes ungratified. A spoilt child of fortune, very tender were the rose leaves that had as yet ruffled his pathway. At the top of the list when he passed out for the Civil Service, with interest at home and in India, from the commencement of his career he had been placed at good stations, and told every day in the week he was on the high road to splendid appointments, as soon as some few years of service had passed over his head. He was, moreover, engaged to a sweet girl in old England—what could he want more?

Besides, he was hard-working, with a true love for his profession, and had just published a manual on Indian law which had taken the Presidency by storm, and had even been permitted by Government to be entered among the sacred departmental archives. It was anent this book he owed the prospect of the proposed shooting expedition. Constant work and hard study had told upon him, and when the last corrected proof had been sent to the printers, he had applied for a month's leave to the Western Ghauts.

Nothing to me is more strangely weird than a night's journey

in a bullock bandy along the silent Indian roads, through the sleepy Hindu villages, with their roused howling, pariah dogs holding concert with the barks of the prowling jackals. Jogging slowly under the spreading branches of the grotesque banyan trees, arched across the path and throwing ghostly shadows among the quivering lights; passing the wayside chutrams, with the fires lighted by wandering beggars and benighted travellers still smouldering among the ashes; ever and anon catching glimpses of the time-worn temples, standing out in the moonlight grey and ghostly, with their shapely pillars, ornate carvings and dusky impenetrable depths of shade; skirting the wide silvery expanse of brimming tanks, gleaming in the moonlight, and crossing now and again some mighty river, flowing peacefully to the sea. It is a wonderful scene; an uncanny and creepy feeling steals over one as the intervals of silence are broken by the rasping croak of the bull-frog or the shrill cry of the night-hawk.

Reid may not have been influenced in the same way, or perhaps not much given to sentiment. He was not in the humour for moonlight musings, for he soon turned his back upon the prospect, lay full length on his mattress, and was in a few moments in the land of happy dreams.

Just as the dawn was breaking in the east, with that sudden and brilliant glow peculiar to India, the bullock cart rumbled into the street of the native village at the foot of the Ghauts, a violent twist of the tails exciting the patient animals into a last expiring effort of extraordinary activity.

The unwonted sharp trot and increased shaking of the country-made springs roused Reid from his slumbers, and he awoke just as his native servant appeared at the door for orders.

They had pulled up at the house of the head man of the district, who, under commands from the collector, was to find the necessary coolies to carry the tonjon (a covered chair) and the baggage up the pass.

A loud call brought several dark forms to the front, among them the *Tahsildar* himself, salaaming and declaring all was ready as the sahib had ordered.

"Would the sahib partake of a little coffee before starting?"

Sipping the welcome beverage as he sat in a solitary chair placed in the low verandah, Reid watched, in the cool grey light of the morning, the preparations for his transit up the precipitous

mountain paths to the coffee plantation to which he was bound. Some score of nearly naked men swarmed round, gesticulating and jabbering over the distribution of the loads, while the indefatigable Runghiah of evil countenance arranged matters to his own satisfaction and his master's welfare with authoritative serenity and quiet activity.

For methodical management, attention to essential details, and minute observance to the personal comfort of his employer, there is no servant under the sun of any clime or nation equal to a first-class native boy. He is a factotum, valet, caterer, *chef de cuisine*, butler and steward, all in one. Without him India is a desert.

In a quarter of an hour the little body of men was under way ; the tonjon bearers singing their wild characteristic rhyme in time to the stereotyped jog-trot march along the paddy bunds leading to the Ghauts, towering purple, mist-covered above them, their lofty summits gold-glinted in the rays of the rising sun.

The path soon began to ascend by the banks of a small rushing stream, nearly hidden in a thick jungle of oleanders and tropical undergrowth.

Very beautiful are these Western Ghauts, extending far south to Cape Comorin, and rearing their massive crowns in precipitous buttresses of jungle-covered rock to the height of some 4,000 or 5,000 feet. Deeply indented with picturesque ravines, down which thunders many a mountain torrent ; thickly clothed with magnificent primeval forests, the haunt of the elephant, tiger, wild boar, deer, and smaller game, they present an ideal paradise to the hunter ; and it was with a sigh of pleasant anticipation Reid, as he ascended higher and higher, viewed the scenes of what he trusted would prove his future deeds of prowess.

Four hours' continuous climb, through increasingly wilder and more beautiful scenery, brought him to the shoulder of the pass, where the road began the descent into the Travancore district, and entered the first coffee clearing, on which was situated the bungalow of Reid's friend. Some few hundred feet below, it stood out in the distance, built on a spur of the hills, with huge precipices bounding it at the back, and an extensive view of mountain, forest, and gorge in front, stretching far away to a silver line on the horizon—the gleam of the Indian Ocean. A hearty welcome from the Scotch planter and a breakfast fit for

the gods, or better still a hungry man, ravenous from inhaling the keen mountain air, awaited Reid's arrival ; and after doing justice to the repast and giving the last station *gup*, he commenced plying his host with questions relative to the object of his visit.

"Come here," said the coffee-planter, Graham by name, stepping outside the rough but cosy sitting-room on to the verandah. "I'll show you in a trice what you are to expect. Look there," pointing to a small forest clearing some hundred feet below them down the nearest gorge, "that's my new bit of coffee-planting this season ; two nights ago a band of elephants broke through the jungle and killed two coolies. I can't get a soul to go down there now. The brutes up-rooted the freshly-planted bushes, and played Old Harry all round. We'd better organize a shooting party in that direction, and some fellows are coming to tiffin to-day to talk it over with you."

"What's the name of the peak to your left, Graham? What a grand mass of rock and forest it is, towering over the rest like a monarch!" and Reid designated with his hand a magnificent mountain almost facing him, whose picturesque, clear-cut form was outlined against the deep cobalt of the sky. The sun, though high, had not penetrated the dark forest-covered ravines and gorges indenting its massive shoulders, and they showed in dark purple furrows down the precipitous sides many thousand feet to the deep valleys below. In shape and size it dwarfed the surrounding hills.

"That's Mahendragheri, or the Mother of the Mountains, the sacred mountain of the hill tribes. No European has, as yet, set foot in its forest recesses, or scaled its rocky heights. The jungle is too impenetrable and the precipices too stiff. Besides, the hill men put every obstacle in the way of getting there if they can. There's a good deal of native superstition and folklore mixed up with it. As far as I can gather, the Mother of the Mountains is, from all accounts, a most malignant old lady, and pursues with her curse any unfortunate who presumes to intrude on her domain. All I can vouch for from my own knowledge is, that I and some other fellows have twice set off determined to hunt on those forbidden grounds and ill-luck has attended us on both occasions."

"You don't surely attribute your misfortunes to the natives' gross superstitions?" asked Reid with evident scorn.

"Not certainly as the cause of the effect. I only insinuate that when Bond broke his leg by a nasty fall on the first day of our expedition, necessitating an immediate return to send him post haste down to the plains; and when I had to come back quicker than I went on our second trial, to find my drying sheds nearly burnt to the ground, there is something in these coincidences to give colour to the native tradition, that no stranger puts foot on Mahendra with impunity. Naturally our disasters were nuts to the aborigines."

"Are elephants there too?" questioned Reid, scanning the scene attentively.

"It's their stronghold, but they are held sacred also. One must get leave from the Travancore Rajah, any way, to shoot them on this side of the Ghauts, and he rarely vouchsafes it. I have, however, a standing order, owing to their depredations and the danger to the coolies and *tapa*\* men travelling from here to Travancore. If any invade my territory or are on the main roads I have permission to dispatch them if I can. There's an old rogue-elephant that comes down from Mahendra. I have a heavy score against him, but it would be a brave man to follow his tracks into those unknown jungles over there; besides," added Graham with a slight smile, "the natives call him 'Shaitan,' the Devil."

The conversation then turned on other matters, the merits of guns, balls and various accoutrements dear to every *shikari's* heart. Some days passed quickly and happily enough, but no elephant fell to the guns of Reid and his friends, though every morning brought tidings of fresh depredations committed by the huge beasts. Awe-stricken coolies related, in excited tones, how one man after another had been attacked and killed by the much dreaded rogue-elephant, who appeared to vanish into thin air when the enthusiastic hunters were put upon his track. The continued recital of this monster's misdeeds excited Reid intensely.

He swore "that cursed brute should give up the ghost from a shot from his express."

Graham only shook his head gravely. He was a quiet staid man, a strict Presbyterian; he looked rather scandalized at his companion's vehemence.

\* Native postmen.

One day better luck attended the party; a small female elephant fell to Reid's rifle, and he was thereby rendered much elated. There was so much of honest boyish enthusiasm and eager excitement about him, that the soberer members of the expedition felt drawn towards him, as to a younger brother fresh from school.

It was delightful to these hard-worked men, living for the greater part of the year lonely and isolated lives, to meet with a spirit so untrammelled by worldly care, throwing off so completely the thralldom of office and appearing so little spoilt by the adoration of society. Reid was always the favourite in every station he entered, where his modest and straightforward character and brilliant abilities endeared him to all. He had many sterling virtues, counterbalanced by fewer faults than most men; chief among the latter was a rather headstrong determination united to a nervous excitability often verging on passion.

Moreover the intense study of law during the past months spent on the plains during the hottest season of the year, with a touch of fever towards the close, had told upon him more than he was aware, and this leave to the hills was as the balm of Gilead to his jaded brain and body.

Towards the end of the third week, when two more elephants, with many smaller heads of game, had made up a goodly bag, the foreman of the estate, a dark, wiry-limbed Tamil, presented himself in the early morning as Graham and his friend were enjoying their *chota hazari* in the cool shade of the verandah prior to arranging their plans for the day.

With a lugubrious countenance the man demanded an interview with his master. Graham stepped aside and after some minutes of earnest conversation came back slowly, with his long Scotch face perceptibly graver and more anxious.

"No bad news, I hope?" queried Reid.

"They are queer creatures, these natives," returned Graham, sitting down to his unfinished cup of chocolate. "One never knows when their keen susceptibilities will be offended, and often the very thing one imagines is being done for their benefit they will calmly tell you is bringing untold horrors upon them. That's why no European treatment will ever efface cholera; their prejudices are so great, they would rather die than owe their lives to our drugs or our doctors. At all events, I despair of

seeing any improvement or signs of enlightened civilization among these hill-men. What do you think Moses, though he professes Christianity, has just told me? It appears that rogue-elephant has been at his pranks again. I was in hopes he had retired to his native fastnesses in the heart of Mahendra, but he took a short nocturnal walk last night down the Travancore Ghaut, met our poor *tapal* man ascending with the bag, seized him, mauled the poor wretch out of all recognition and returned to the jungle, where his tracks can be seen making back to his haunts in the sacred mountain. The *tapal* man's son was with him and providentially escaped. He brought the news but not our letters; they are scattered, I fear beyond recovery, at the scene of the catastrophe.

"But here's the queer part. Moses solemnly affirms that in his opinion and the coolies', all the past disasters and this crowning misfortune are to be laid to our door! *We*, my dear fellow, have brought these calamities upon these innocent victims by our indiscriminate slaughter of the herd of sacred elephants. You, above all, Reid, by your irreverent manner of talking of Mahendra, and your known blood-thirstiness against the holy animals, have incurred the wrath of the Great Spirit of the Mountain. The natives are fully determined this rogue-elephant is the Devil himself let loose upon our devoted heads, as a punishment for your blasphemy. Moses summed up his indictment by gravely asking me if you could not be persuaded to return sooner to the plains so as to avert further misfortunes."

The absurdity of the idea made both men laugh.

"Instead of departing earlier I'll employ the short time that remains to me in hunting up this evil monster and making him pay the just penalty for his crimes. Come, Graham, stir your stumps, old man, and give directions for beaters at once. I'll see to the rifles and will be ready as soon as you are."

With excited voice and gesture, Reid rose preparatory to going to his room. Graham placed his hand on the young man's arm.

"It's no use, my dear fellow, you'll not get a hill-man to follow you. If I could make up a party I'd do so with pleasure. In the meanwhile I have already sent some coolies down the ghaut for the poor fellow's remains. They'll be back by tiffin time, and we shall hear more definitely in which direction the rogue

has made tracks ; he is, by now, twenty or thirty miles above, in the heart of the jungles of Mahendra, where I, for one, decline to follow him. Living amongst the natives as I do I never run counter to their prejudices more than I can help. Besides, without the aid of the hill-men, whose superstitious fears are just now greatly excited, it would be impossible to attempt the expedition. They alone know the land-marks and beaten tracks through the jungle."

"I declare, to hear you talk, Graham, you might have changed places with my boy, Runghiah, who is the most bigoted heathen alive," answered Reid with ill-concealed impatience. "He has been inwardly cursing me, I am positive, for every shot I have fired and has done poojah to the Devil ever since his arrival here. And if you believe in the power of the evil eye, you watch him when I inveigh against elephants. He positively glares at me. But this is all rot, not following up these tracks! Look here, Graham, if you are so confoundedly particular about hurting their feelings, I'll take the responsibility of tackling these fellows, and see if a little bribery and corruption will not make them change their minds. Surely, the death of this brute is more to be desired than a repetition of this morning's slaughter. I certainly consider that in the cause of humanity the rogue should be dispatched as expeditiously as possible. Should I be able to collect a sufficient number of coolies, you will not stand in my way if I go alone?"

"No," replied the planter doubtfully. "I cannot, of course, coerce your movements. I can only give you my view of the matter as my experience dictates. However, you'll not get a man to go with you, I am confident."

Contrary, however, to Graham's expectations, and to his undisguised surprise—by what persuasions and golden keys he never discovered—in half an hour's time Reid appeared with his scratch troop of guides and beaters, fully equipped for the expedition.

The young man had recovered his temper and good spirits. He laughingly asked Graham to congratulate him and wish him "Good luck."

"I wish you a safe return," answered the Scotchman with some gravity. "Don't be fool-hardy, and follow the hill-men's directions implicitly, is my last word of advice."

"Runghiah comes with me. He understands their lingo, so I



can't go wrong. Ta-ta, old man! Here's death to the sacred elephant of Mahendra, to the old rogue of a Shaitan."

As the words passed the young civilian's lips, Graham happened to catch the transient expression on the face of Reid's native servant. His whole countenance was disfigured by a look of concentrated hatred and heathen fanaticism, as his sinister, deep-set eyes rested on his master with a fierce vindictive glare. Feeling Graham's gaze directed towards himself the man's habitual reserved suavity of manner instantly returned, but that fleeting glimpse had revealed to Graham the innermost recesses of an evil and revengeful spirit.

He felt inclined to draw Reid aside and warn him—of what? A moment's thought showed how slight were his grounds for any tangible suspicion, and, moreover, while he debated the opportunity was lost. Reid, with impatient stride, was already some way down the road towards the spur that connected their side of the valley with the stupendous mountain opposite.

With a strange foreboding of evil, Graham turned back into his bungalow, where he remained writing letters for the homeward mail till roused by the return of his foreman, who had headed the party to recover the corpse of the *tapal* man.

The native entered slowly and after salaaming said in a low, concentrated voice:

"Is it true, sahib, that Reid Sahib done gone to Mahendragheri?"

"True that he has gone towards the mountain, but many things may turn him back from venturing far, Moses," returned Graham in measured accents.

The Tamil clasped his thin, nervous hands with a gesture of despair.

"Why Master Sahib let young master go? See, Graham Sahib, I tell you true. The curse of Mahendra will be upon him! She will bear no strange foot upon her mountain. He will die, that brave young sahib! Even if he kill the sacred elephant it is nothing. He only kill the body. The Shaitan will still follow him. As the elephant dies, so will he himself die! I have said."

"How you, a Christian, can talk such utter bosh surpasses my understanding! I am ashamed of you, Moses!" ejaculated Graham with some severity.

"See, sahib," returned the foreman respectfully, but with quiet decision, "the missionary sahibs they persuade one, two, three, maybe ten men to serve Christian God, one in this village, one in that. They teach them God is good, all sin bad, Christian God very strong, Devil very weak, very much afraid ; but, think you, sahib, because those few men do Christian worship among all the thousand, thousand heathen round, all bad has become good—that the Shaitans are frightened away by those ten men ? I am a Christian true, Graham Sahib, and I pray Christian God, but the devils of the heathen are still here. The Shaitan of Mahendra will not go for me, nor for twenty missionary sahibs. It is as strong as death and as cruel as sin !"

The man spoke with repressed vehemence and honest conviction.

His master did not answer. Long experience warned him how futile was argument against the most deep-rooted superstitions of the natives, who through long ages of darkness, from generation to generation, have been in bondage to the powers of evil. Besides, the astute Tamil's crude theory after all hit the right nail on the head. A few conversions here and there would never uplift the pall of heathen ignorance or lessen the gross abominable vice with which the Indian races are imbued. Too truly had Moses attested to the presence of the Devil and all his works still presiding in their midst. The Shaitan had not been dislodged from his fastnesses ; he had not even been shaken.

The long tropical day dragged on slowly to its close ; the dark blue shadows deepened in the valleys and crept up the mountain sides ; the distant ranges glowed in a crimson haze, while the western horizon shimmered in golden flame.

Graham stood anxiously watching for some sign of the hunting party. At his desire the overseer had gone down the mountain to the connecting spur, to render assistance if necessary, some coolies accompanying him with refreshments and torches.

But as yet there was no sign nor sound of human voice.

If returning triumphant, far down the ghaut and across the precipitous gorge would be wafted the cheerful song of the Tamils and the wild, weird hunting chant of the hill-men.

The sunlight faded ; the intense blue-grey twilight, peculiar to

those regions, descended on the cold, clearly-defined forms of the higher mountains, leaving the lower depths in impenetrable shadow. Soon night had thrown her sable mantle over the whole scene.

Graham at midnight gave up hope of his friend's return till the morrow.

At early dawn, after a restless, broken sleep, he set out down the path to Mahendragheri, accompanied by Moses and some coolies, who had returned overnight with no tidings of the hunting party.

For some distance they walked rapidly through the cleared portion of the coffee estate, and then entered the beautiful forest, clothing all the available points of vantage on the gigantic precipices.

Graham was too occupied with anxious thoughts to give much attention to the scene around him, yet it was fair enough to merit more than a passing glance. Lovely ferns, rare orchids, and luxuriant creepers lined the rock-bound way, while overhead the thick and varied foliage of grand old monarchs of the woods threw a grateful shade on the steep and rugged path below. A trickling, murmuring stream often crossed the road, tumbling down the rocks to join the main torrent, rushing madly over its boulder-strewn bed in the cool, purple depths of the gorge far down the ghaut, its sullen roar often striking on the ear.

In about two hours the spur was crossed to the opposite side, and Graham stood on the outlying flank of the great sacred mountain. He was still, however, on a well-beaten track to some coffee-plantations on the further side of the ravine, but it was not till after another hour's further trudge that he came across signs of the divergence of the hunting party from the main road. Here and there, at longer and shorter intervals, appeared abundant signs of the proximity of elephants; their well-beaten tracks through gigantic elephant-grass were evident on all sides, leading from the heart of the mountain to the ravine below.

It was one of these Reid had followed, according to the opinion of the hill-men. With the same unerring sagacity of the North American Indian they can track man and beast through the pathless jungles.

Graham and his coolies halloed and coo-ee'd to attract attention. The forest rang with their shouts, and the echoes resounded clear and sharp from one precipice to another.

"If he's living he must hear and call back," muttered the Scotchman.

But, as of old to the worshippers of Baal, there was neither speech nor language, nor any that answered.

Just as Graham was debating the advisability of running counter to the openly-expressed terror of the natives and ascending the mountain in search of his friend, a long-drawn, distant cry broke upon his ear. With might and main he answered back, and strode rapidly in the direction of the voice on one of the beaten elephant tracks leading steeply up into the thickest jungle of Mahendra, followed at a lagging distance by his half-hearted crew.

In a short time, tearing down the precipitous path in hot haste, consternation and distress depicted upon his countenance, appeared one of the hill-men who had elected to follow Reid. His story was soon told.

"The sahib had shot the rogue-elephant with his own hand right through the forehead, *there*," and the native put his finger to the centre of his black, perspiring brow. "The huge beast had sunk down, dead as a stone; but as they ran up to the sahib he too had fallen down. Runghiah and the coolies were now carrying him through the jungle. He did not know for certain if the sahib was dead. He was white—so white. He looked like death. It was the Shaitan of Mahendra who had struck him down in vengeance for his slaughter of the sacred elephant."

It appeared, on further inquiry, that the day before Reid had tracked the brute far up into the recesses of the forest, and, losing the trail at dusk, had encamped on the mountain for the night. Early in the morning he had resumed the hunt, and had met with his enemy above the jungle, among the coarse thick grass clothing the summit of the mountain.

As Graham listened to this recital numerous footsteps heralded the approach of the rest of the party.

Borne on the shoulders of the natives was the prostrate body of Gifford Reid, followed by Runghiah, whose face wore an expression of vindictive exultation.

The planter glanced at him suspiciously, and then at his master, who, at first sight, appeared lifeless.

A hasty inspection proved he was still breathing, though whether suffering from a faint, a hurt, or sunstroke, Graham was unable to ascertain. He rapidly made up an improvised hurdle, placed the unconscious man upon it, and hurriedly turned his steps homeward. Reid, under rough but efficacious treatment, soon regained his senses, and declared his belief that as soon as he had shot the elephant, seeing his aim had taken effect, he had sprung forward into the open under the full rays of the blazing sun, and felt himself struck down on the instant by them.

He appeared nervously anxious to verify and reiterate this version of his story, and, strange to say, showed none of that natural elation at accomplishing the object of his expedition as might have been expected.

He did not even bemoan the abandonment of the valuable tusks, as the coolies could not be induced to return for them. Thus the defunct monarch of Mahendra was left to rot, a prey to wild beasts and myriad ants.

After a day or two Reid professed himself well enough to descend the Ghauts to Manapatti, and Graham did not oppose his decision, deeming it best that he should obtain, without further delay, proper medical advice.

He was not, in fact, easy about his friend. Reid appeared to have received some severe mental shock. He was silent, depressed, and, for so bright and genial a spirit, even morose. The only topic of conversation with which he broke the monotony of silence was to repeat in low tones the history of the hunt.

"Look! I hit him there, Graham. Just as the major told me, straight and clean in the centre of his forehead. It was a grand shot! My hand never swerved, my eye never wavered! The ball went straight to the brain, Graham, straight as a die to the brain."

Once his friend detected him with his forefinger pressed firmly in the middle of his forehead—so firmly there was a perceptible red mark left as he drew it hastily away. He laughed uneasily.

"Do you know what my boy has just told me?" he asked in a quick, nervous manner. "He inquired with tender solicitude if I felt any pain here. And when I replied why the deuce I should

feel a pain there or anywhere else, he answered with his usual sardonic grin, 'Pardon, sahib, me very glad to hear master say that thing. The curse of Mahendra is there! No pain, then the Shaitan no hurt master!' I told him to hold his tongue, and not talk such folly. But afterwards I couldn't for the life of me resist asking about this dread curse, upon which he answered with solemn unction, 'Master hit the sacred elephant here,' touching his forehead. 'Where the elephant die, master have plenty pain! Master die, too!'

"That is the superstition, I believe," remarked Graham.

"All I can say is, and you may laugh at me as a fool, old man, ever since that idiot spoke I have had a pain there."

The Scotchman did not laugh. He felt assured that from the effects of undue exposure and excitement his friend was on the verge of a serious illness. Fever, probably, was heralding its advent by these signs of mental aberration and hysterical fancies. The sooner he could get him down the ghaut the better, and without more ado he determined to set off then and there with his suffering guest.

Reid acquiesced without a demur. He seemed strangely subdued, and relapsed into silent moodiness.

The evening found both men on the plains, installed in the dak bungalow. Much to Graham's disgust, he found, even with the united efforts of the *Tahsildar* and his own foreman, there would be no chance of procuring a bullock bandy for two or three hours. He was, perforce, obliged to possess his soul in patience, and bear the tedium of the delay as best he could.

After a hasty meal (at which Reid ate nothing), he went out into the verandah to watch for the promised vehicle. The air of the inner room appeared stifling after the clear keen atmosphere of the hills. He could not, however, prevail on Reid to join him; and the conviction gained upon him that the poor fellow was rapidly getting worse, and felt too ill for any exertion. Having made the invalid as comfortable as inadequate means permitted, and as his presence seemed to irritate him, the planter left him to his own thoughts and dreamy silence in the dim dusk of the gathering night.

How long he sat wrapt in his own anxious musings—his ear strained to catch the sound of the expected conveyance, the time appearing interminably long and dreary—he never knew, but

suddenly he was struck by the intense stillness of the inner room.

Once or twice before, 'at intervals, Reid had moved, coughed, heaved an audible sigh, and otherwise given tangible proofs of his presence ; but now not a sound, not a movement disturbed the heavy waves of sultry air. Once Runghiah had glided in, and returned to report, in passionless subdued accents, "Reid Sahib was sleeping—sleeping fast." Beyond that interruption the sick man had been left undisturbed. Graham rose hastily with an undefined fear, and entering the whitewashed scantily-furnished room, passed quickly to the centre table at which sat Reid.

He was leaning back with his head resting against the high hard back of the wooden chair, his legs placed, crossing each other, on the edge of the table. In the dim uncertain light his face looked drawn, grey, and very still. But on the up-turned forehead was a small round mark, from which trickled down, over the pallid skin, a ghastly red stream, dyeing the white shirt beneath and falling drop by drop on the floor. As Graham touched the cold nerveless hand hanging down by the side, the terrible truth flashed upon him.

He called wildly for a light, and by its wavering rays he saw Gifford Reid was dead ! Shot by his own hand through the brain by a little pocket revolver of small smooth bore and noiseless action.

It had fallen from the limp cold hand on to the matted floor.

*The curse of Mahendra was accomplished ! The Shaitan of the Mountain had claimed his victim—or had Runghiah anything to do with it ?*

Who can tell ?

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## The Abbot's Secret.

IN September, 1537, the dissolution of the abbey and monastery so long established at Tintern, in Monmouthshire, was ordered by Henry VIII. The monks were expelled, and the abbot commanded to deliver up the abbey seal, all deeds, plate and inventories. Great was the rage and disappointment of the royal commissioners when they were told the inventories had been accidentally burnt some years before, and that the altar vessels and furnishings were of base metal or brass, the reliquaries even being copper, gilt, set with false stones. As all jewels and plate were to be reserved for the king, this fact caused great indignation among the officials, and the abbot was roughly questioned many times, being threatened with death or imprisonment if it was ascertained he had concealed treasures; but he explained he had only been elected abbot a few months and knew nothing of the inventories, but he regretted their loss, as they would prove the abbey had never possessed valuables of any kind for many centuries. After a long and fruitless examination, he was told to depart, and one of the commission being a relative, he was permitted to take the choir book he had presented as a dedication gift to the abbey. From the port of Bristol he sailed for Wexford, and sought refuge with the prior of the Benedictine monastery, where he remained till his death some months after his arrival. His last act was to rebind the choir book and present it to the library of the monastery. These are all the facts known of the last abbot of Tintern Abbey, but some strange occurrences which took place in an old house near the ruins some thirty years back, lead us to the conclusion that Abbot Wych possessed a secret which was to remain hidden for nearly three hundred years, and the whole circumstances are so extraordinary that the account given below is well worth the consideration of those who study and are interested in psychical research.

In the year 1869, the iron works which were established at Tintern soon after 1537 were removed to Portskevit, and the workmen's cottages were allowed to fall into ruins after being



dismantled, but one more important dwelling, which, though in a bad state of repair, was still habitable, was left untouched. In 1600, this had been the residence of one of the proprietors of the iron works, and it continued for many generations in the possession of the same family, till changes of fortune caused them to sell the house, after a fire had destroyed half of it, then it at once became the residence of the managers of the foundries, and when another fifty years had still further deteriorated its appearance, overseers were placed in it who lived and sometimes died there. In 1869 it was decided by the company to remove the works to another part of the country. The last overseer had gone from the house two months, and the inhabitants of Tintern Parva were speculating over its fate, when, to the surprise of all, it found a tenant in Mrs. Herbert, who with her two daughters offered to rent it. She was the widow of a Bristol bookseller, and had during the last year passed through much tribulation, for her husband, possessing the tastes of an antiquarian and being a visionary man, had filled his shop with works quite unsuited to the requirements of the present generation. After a struggle, protracted over many years, the end came at last. Everything had to be sold, which so afflicted the poor old man that he did not long survive the change in his circumstances, and very soon after his death, Mrs. Herbert, hearing Abbey House was to be had at a very low rent, decided to take it, and try if she could live there with her daughters on a small annuity secured to her of £40 a year. In the June quarter of 1869, the small family moved in and settled themselves in Tintern Parva. Abbey House, though in its decadence, was still somewhat superior to the houses near it. Viewed from the front it had the appearance of a large cottage which had seen better days, but looking at it after passing a few yards up the road, a side wing built of stone was disclosed, in which could be seen two beautiful Early Gothic windows, without glass certainly, but with the stone mullions and tracery very perfect; there was a large garden also, beyond it, in which sheds and outbuildings covered with ivy were visible, and a magnificent old chestnut tree shaded the wide terrace walk under the wing. Ancient fruit trees and bushes bordered the path that led to the river bank, where, just below the water, stone steps could be seen, and the foundations for massive piers. Tourists and strangers always made eager inquiries about the

house and asked why the brick front had been added to the stone wing, but no one in the village seemed inclined to answer these questions. All they would or could say was, that they called it Abbey House, because it was near the old abbey, and it was built hundreds of years ago for some great nobleman who owned the iron works; the house had then a large picture gallery and a banquet hall, but a fire broke out one September and burnt all the mansion except the wing now left, and after that, managers and overseers were put in. Then perhaps the narrator would add, "We knows it is haunted! and we never goes a-near it after twilight whatever!" and no amount of questioning could get an explanation of these mysterious sentences. Mrs. Herbert found out before she had been a month in the house that none of the villagers would come near them after dark, and tales were told her in "strict confidence" of figures often seen in the garden, and that in the month of September lights wandered between the house and the ruined abbey.

Mrs. Herbert listened, but she smiled slightly, and refused to credit any of the ghostly stories told her. After many months of anxiety she had found a resting-place, the house and rent suited her small income, and she determined no rumours of shadowy appearances should cause her to abandon her present home.

At this period the family were living in the cottage front, which consisted of two large parlours and two bedrooms over, to which access was given by a door in one corner of the inner room; the outer was entered from the garden through the porch, and another door opposite it led into a passage below the wing and to the kitchens. A noble stone staircase led to the wing, richly carved once, but now much broken. Ascending this about twenty steps, a landing and wide archway appeared, and through the last was seen a long gallery, the end of which was circular and lighted by three long lancet-shaped windows. Two of these were boarded up, and the third gave very little light, as paper had been pasted over at least half of it when the glass had been broken or had fallen out. The walls were whitewashed, and on one side were the two windows which could be seen from the road. They were fitted with frames canvassed over, as a defence against the weather, and their beauty could only be guessed at by the pointed carved tops seen above the woodwork. For

many years the long gallery had served as a lumber room for the occupants of the house. Even now it was covered with straw, bits of boxes, rags of carpet and rubbish of all sorts ; it could not have been properly cleared out for generations. Under the lancet windows stood an old chest about six feet long, without a lid. It was screwed to the floor and clamped to the wall. It had evidently served as a convenient receptacle for useless articles of every description, the quantity and worthless nature of which had prevented time or money being spent on their removal. The chest was full now and overflowing. On the walls still remained marks of where a partition had once divided the gallery and a low arched doorway led into three small rooms at the top of the staircase. The kitchens were part of the old mansion with vaulted roofs and fan tracery ornamentation. The large fireplaces had been bricked up and the size of the windows reduced. These and the gallery were all that remained of the ancient building. Outside in the garden was an archway, under the lancet window, which had long ago been blocked up, leaving space only for a small bench. A few ruined sheds with Tudor Gothic openings for air and light, and a second beautiful stone archway leading into the outer kitchen, were all that now remained of former grandeur.

It was usual in Tintern Parva village to take lodgers for the summer months and fishing season, so that Mrs. Herbert, after consulting her daughters (for they kept no servant), thought she would do so too, and advertised in one of the London papers. She quickly received three replies. One of them she thought might suit ; it was written from the Mitre Hotel, Oxford. A gentleman named Prior and his son wished to make their headquarters in the fishing district of the Wye. They would probably remain only a few days at a time at the Abbey House as they intended to make tours in the neighbourhood, and go and return as suited them. They offered £1 a week for two months certain. It was quite natural that a provisional acceptance of these gentlemen should be sent off by that night's post, and Mrs. Herbert decided that the cottage part of the house should be given up to the lodgers, and she and her daughters arranged to take for themselves the three rooms over the kitchens next to the long gallery. Marion, the elder girl, suggested it "would be a good time to clear it out, so that they could use it as a sitting-room ;"

but Lucy, the younger and more delicate sister, exclaimed, "It would take months to get rid of all the rubbish, and it was a man's work to clean it!" Mrs. Herbert smiled on both, and reminded them that only the strictest economy would allow her to pay for the furniture necessary to furnish the bedrooms, but there would be no objection to turning out the long gallery presently and well cleaning it, as it would make a convenient place for exercise in wet weather.

The day after it was settled to take the Priors, Mrs. Herbert paid a long visit to the rector of Tintern, Mr. Courtenay, to ask his opinion and consult him as to the propriety of requesting references from Mr. Prior, who had not offered any. The rector advised her to write and request a small payment in advance, and all were satisfied when, in answer to a rather timid inquiry on the subject, a letter came inclosing a £5 note for a month's payment.

The next few days were busy ones, and it was a relief to all when the afternoon came that brought a tall grey-haired man and his stout young son of twenty-five in a fly from Chepstow. They had very little luggage with them, if we except a large bundle of wraps and a great display of fishing tackle. Mr. Prior seemed charmed with the quarters offered them, and thanked his hostess for taking so much trouble to make them comfortable. In a very short time they had settled down to enjoy country life in a small village. They had tickets to fish in the preserved waters, and the father with his son walked out every morning in a different direction, sometimes with fishing rods, but more often without.

A very few days after their arrival they had heard all that Mrs. Herbert could tell them about Abbey House and its surroundings, and had examined with the greatest attention every part of the old building inside and out.

Mr. Prior spent hours in the evening talking to Lucy in the garden while she tied up her roses and pinks, or watered the large geraniums in pots, placed each side of the terrace walk, he smoking and observing all around him during the time.

At nine o'clock the cottage part of the house was left in possession of the gentlemen, and the door of communication locked, everything requisite being placed in the parlour that might be required before morning, then the mother and daughters

went up to their rooms in the wing. Mrs. Herbert and Lucy had the inner room and Marion slept alone in the one that opened into the gallery. For the first few nights after the change she fell asleep quickly, only waking in the early morning, but after about a week it became a custom to wake suddenly as if some noise had disturbed her ; then she would sit up in bed and listen, but she only heard the mice scuttling behind the wainscot or the wind rattling through the boarded-up windows outside her door. In a few moments she would lie down again and think of the occult books she had read in her father's shop, and wonder how much truth and how much imagination helped to make up the volumes written on such subjects, and how *she* would feel if she became herself the subject of a spiritual manifestation such as were described in books she had read. One night waking as usual with a start, and the night feeling hot and sultry, she rose and walked to the window. All looked lovely outside in the moonlight and she drew a chair towards her and sat down. Her eyes wandered over the river to the hills beyond it, then fell on the garden below, and it was with a shock of surprise she saw a tall figure in white on the walk under her window. She watched it a few moments and then it seemed to melt into the mist of the river near the archway beneath the lancet windows. She recovered herself in a few moments and thought it was a hallucination ; then feeling a strange sleepiness steal over her she returned to her bed, and only woke late in the morning when her mother called her and asked her to dress quickly, for she was going to Chepstow market with Lucy and there was much to see to before they could start. Marion was soon in the kitchen preparing breakfast for the lodgers, and when she carried it in Mr. Prior was standing before the little hanging book-shelves, and turning as she entered, said :

"Who reads translations from 'Swedenborg's Life and Writings' ? and I see 'Home on Spiritualism' and 'Kane on Mesmerism,' and M. M. H. is written in one. Are they yours, young lady ?"

"Yes," answered the girl ; "they are old books my father said I might have. Do you understand mesmerism ? I have always wished to make that power mine to use for the alleviation of suffering. Do you believe there *is* such a power ?"

"It is far too large a subject to enter on now, my dear young



lady," and replacing the book Mr. Prior walked towards Marion, fixing his eyes on her and saying :

"But why did you leave the bird-cage on the breakfast table this morning?"

With a start of astonishment she looked and saw on the middle of the cloth the cage with her canary hopping about in it, but as she rushed forward to remove it, Mr. Prior (still fixing his eyes on her) said :

"Oh, no! there is no cage on the table; it hangs as usual in the window; it must have been the reflection of the sun on the cloth." He quickly pulled down the blind, adding, "You see, I am right."

Feeling rather bewildered, but sure she had been mistaken, Marion gave her mother's message that she and Lucy were going to Chepstow, and asked what orders Mr. Prior had to give about his dinner. To divert her mind from the incident of the bird-cage he said he and his son would be out all day, as they were going to Ross, but if Mrs. Herbert could kindly bring back any letters waiting for them from the post office it would much oblige them; then he added :

"Are you not afraid of being left alone in the house all day?"

"Oh, no!" answered Marion; "I have too much to do to think about being alone, and I shall not have finished till it is nearly time for mother to be back again."

And so it turned out. The clock had struck four and it was a quarter after before she had changed her gown and was taking a well-earned rest in the high-backed armchair which she dragged into the archway of the kitchen door, and in which she lay back comfortably watching the birds and fleecy clouds, and certainly slept for a few moments till she was roused by the sound of footsteps, and then a voice, which said :

"Do not be startled. We found it so hot when we had walked half-way to Ross, that my son proposed we should dine at a village inn and come back again and solace ourselves with a cigar under the shade of the trees by the river."

Marion had started up from her chair at the first word of Mr. Prior's sentence, and answered quickly :

"I am so glad you have returned; now you can tell me more on the subject we touched on this morning. I am most anxious to know something about mesmerism and its power. I hope

my mother will allow me presently to be a hospital nurse, and then I might be able to use it as an aid to medicine if I could acquire the gift of soothing my patients."

With a smile Mr. Prior drew near, saying: "Have you ever seen a person mesmerized? But I suppose not, as you ask for information. Mesmerism is a most useful agent if properly applied, and is able to give blessed relief to suffering humanity; but no one but a strong medium who sympathizes with the sufferer can use it with good effect. But does your mother approve of your studies in this direction?" and then he continued abruptly: "At what time do you expect her home from Chepstow?"

"My mother," answered Marion, "does not quite like me inquiring into these strange "uncanny" things, as she calls them, but she has never forbidden me to continue my studies of the supernatural. I expect she will be back to tea by half-past five."

Mr. Prior lighted a cigar, and after a few minutes of thoughtful silence observed:

"I can tell you wonderful things in connection with this subject, but before I can do so I should like to ascertain if you possess any power as a medium, or if your power is worth developing. To do this I must try if it is possible to put you into the trance state, or, as you would say, if you can be mesmerized. Are you willing to try? Here comes my son with his sketch-book; he shall move your chair a little under the archway in the garden," and then he said to Marion, who had eagerly jumped up and helped to move her chair, "Now sit down! You are not afraid?"

"No!" she replied, "not afraid of being mesmerized, but afraid I may not be a good subject, and your efforts to influence my mind may not be successful."

"Do not think of anything in particular, my dear young lady. Now lean back in your chair, fix your eyes on mine while I make the passes, so; that is well."

Marion had raised her head and fixed her eyes on Mr. Prior's, who moved his hands slowly up and down towards her, and after a few minutes her whole frame quivered and she half started up out of her seat, but with a stern, "Sleep, at once!" from the mesmerist she fell back, her eyes closed, and she appeared per-

fectly unconscious. For a second or two Mr. Prior kept his eyes fixed on her face, still continuing the passes; then he advanced and raised the eyelids and examined the eyes; they were fixed and blind to all outward objects.

"Bryan, come here," were his next words. "Have you the prior's letter he gave me to aid our search? You must take down all she says. We are indeed fortunate in finding a trance medium on the spot to help us; she is possibly also *clairvoyante*," and, taking the girl's hand in his own and placing his other hand on her forehead, Mr. Prior addressed her:

"Marion Herbert, can you follow my thoughts? Tell me who I am! where I came from! and why!"

A struggle seemed to take place in Marion's mind; her lips moved quickly but no sound came, and her hands opened and shut convulsively.

"I *order* you to speak!" commanded the mesmerist. "Tell me who I am and where I come from!"

"You are a secret agent of a powerful society, and were once a choir boy at Wexford Benedictine Monastery," was the reply, given in a hollow unnatural voice which seemed to proceed from the lips of no living person, so white and expressionless appeared the face in the shadow of the archway.

"Why am I here?"

"You seek a treasure hidden by ——."

"Quick! give me the abbot's paper, Bryan!" and loosing the hand he had held, he placed in it a fragment of yellow paper, which seemed to have been pasted on the cover of a book. Holding it in Marion's hand, Mr. Prior asked: "Can you read this?"

She raised it to her forehead and held it there, and then the monotonous voice read: "I, Richard Wych, last Abbot of Tintern, saved the property of the Church from the hand of the spoiler by concealing it in the chamber of the 'penitent,' under the altar in my private chapel; seek it!"

"Where?" again questioned Mr. Prior, as the voice ceased.

"I cannot say, there is no more writing! All has gone from me! Wait! Ask me another day! My thoughts are troubled! I see an old man writing and fixing his letter on the inside of his missal cover, then concealing it among the other books in the monastery library. Let me wake! I can do no more!"



At this moment the noise of the wheels of the pony-cart were heard on the road, and Bryan exclaimed:

"Wake her, sir, for God's sake! or we shall be caught. Here come the mother and sister."

Quickly removing his hand from the forehead of the girl, Mr. Prior made with both hands the reversed passes over Marion's face and body, and threw the whole of his magnetic strength into his action and voice as he said in a tone of authority:

"Wake instantly! and forget——"

For a few seconds both men hardly breathed, so intense was their anxiety that Marion should recover consciousness; it was with a sigh of relief that they watched her eyes slowly unclosed and her body start into active life again.

As she sat up, Mr. Prior stepped quickly back to the side of her chair and Marion exclaimed:

"There! you see what a bad subject I am. I tried my best to sleep, but could not; the lapping of the water against the bank disturbed my mind. I am so sorry, but I hope you will try me again; one failure will not discourage me. Oh! dear! how tired I feel. I can hardly move. Why, mother and Lucy are coming down the path! How strange! for I heard no carriage wheels. Excuse me, I must go and help bring in the marketing. Lucy is calling me," and Marion passed while speaking through the kitchen archway.

After a pause Bryan observed:

"We are well out of that, father; better luck next time. There is no doubt Father Ambrose is right, and when he found the abbot's book with the double binding which concealed the paper he gave you, he hit the truth when he said the search must be carried on at Tintern Abbey in England, not at the abbey of the same name in Ireland. You must try the girl again or give it up. We shall not get much out of it even if we find the hoard of the old abbot. We have been here three weeks fooling about without result, and we may be called away any day to give the *séance* at Scarborough our agent was to arrange for us—it will not do to neglect the substance for the shadow, father."

"You are a very wise and prudent young man," answered Mr. Prior, stooping to pick up the yellow paper that had

fluttered from Marion's hand as she rose; "but, remember, we are only allowed to practise our 'profession' (shall we call it?) on the one condition that we assist our Mother Church by its aid, if required. We shall surely be reminded of it if we attempt to break faith, and should we succeed we shall be well paid. But you are right: I am rather sick of prowling about in the dark or at early dawn playing the monk. I must confess I was a little scared last night in the garden. I felt sure I saw a figure on the terrace walk, but it was only the mist from the river; approaching it I saw quite plainly the arch under the gallery which had seemed to me a minute before to be a tall shape in white. I do not suppose it possible that any one else is after the abbot's hidings, or I should have thought there were 'two Richmonds in the field.' Ha! ha! but see! there is our landlady coming towards us."

So saying, Mr. Prior and his son entered the kitchen and met Mrs. Herbert, who gave them two letters and the information that high tea was ready in the parlour. When the letters were opened their contents changed the plans laid out by the lodgers for the next week. One was from the agent at Scarborough, telling them the *séance* was fixed for the next week, and from Brighton came a request—almost a command—from Lady Maud asking for their presence at a drawing-room meeting at her house, to which she had invited a large party of friends to witness the marvellous gifts possessed by Mr. Prior and his son; inclosed was a cheque for £50.

An animated discussion took place over these letters, and when it was concluded the Priors went in search of Mrs. Herbert, whom they found in the kitchen exhibiting her purchases to Marion, and the little family party experienced a shock of astonishment when the announcement was made to them that important business called their lodgers away before five next morning. They must catch the first train to London at Chepstow and would breakfast there. No one was to get up to see them off. After accounts were settled, promises were made by Mr. Prior that they would speedily return and write frequently; then "good-nights" and "good-byes" were exchanged, and with much hand-shaking all round the father and son returned to their rooms to finish their interrupted meal, and after it to pack their bags with necessary articles for a week, leaving

the rest of their luggage directed, so that it could be sent to an address in London if necessary.

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The night after the Priors left, Marion woke as usual just before dawn, and feeling a cool air pass over her face, imagined she must have forgotten to fasten her door securely. Without waiting to light her candle she felt her way to it. As her hand touched the handle it fell open and she became aware that the whole gallery was filled with a luminous mist, through which all objects were distinctly visible. Advancing a step to see if it came through the broken windows she was suddenly arrested and unable to move; turning her head towards the end where the windows were situated, she saw (or imagined she saw), in the place of the old chest, a high altar covered with a white embroidered cloth; on it were placed tall candles, vases of flowers, silver vessels, and in the centre a crucifix; above all, on a bracket, a large figure of the Virgin, and in front, on his knees, an old man dressed in white, whom she vaguely seemed to recognize. As she looked on him he disappeared, shadowy forms passed her and she felt the air displaced as they advanced towards the altar, on reaching which each pair laid something they had carried between them on the lowest step. They knelt at the sides, and in a moment the altar slowly moved along the wall, and as Marion gazed, faded or became absorbed in the surrounding mist, which gradually clearing away, the old chest became visible, and the tall lancet windows above it. Then that strange feeling of sleepiness fell over her, and some power impelled her with quite resistless force into her room, where she was placed on her bed and slept heavily till morning.

Marion Herbert being a child of an intellectual visionary, it was necessary, to keep nature's balance even, that she should be endowed with the gift of practicality, and therefore, though she vaguely sought books treating of the spirit world, she read them not to gratify an ignorant pleasure found in reading blood-curdling narrations, but with the view of ascertaining if the powers written of could be employed to benefit any one. This practical method of treating the information she acquired was the means of relieving her mind of those fears experienced by the ignorant and superstitious. So that when, on waking, her thoughts turned to the vision of the night, she sought to find a

key to it and a reason why such a circumstance should have occurred to her, feeling strongly that there was a purpose in it which she was to find out. After some reflection she determined on taking the first step, which should be the cleaning and clearing out of the long gallery. On joining her mother and Lucy at breakfast she proposed that as their lodgers had left for a week or two and there was much less work, it would be a very good time to turn out the long gallery. "We can get in Mrs. Marshall, mother, to help Lucy and me," she said; "she is a very strong, capable woman. We will run down to the cottage and secure her for the afternoon. You, dear mother, are to sit in the porch with your knitting; we will surprise you by tea-time with a new clean room."

By four o'clock that day the washing and scrubbing of the gallery was in vigorous progress, and at half-past Mrs. Marshall came downstairs, hot and dusty, saying she must now go home and get her children's tea. The young ladies would not want her again till next morning, as there was not very much more to be done. All was cleared out except the old chest. After paying her, Mrs. Herbert put down her work, and thinking the girls might like tea soon went towards the kitchen to see about it. As she opened the parlour door a crash and loud exclamations met her ear. Much frightened, she ran up the stairs into the gallery, and at first could see no one, the dust was rising in such thick clouds from the end of it, under the windows. Advancing hurriedly, she perceived Lucy holding Marion's hands and trying to pull her out of the old chest. When she reached them they told her there was not much the matter, no one was hurt, but Marion had jumped into the chest to clean it out quicker, and part of the bottom broke away with a loud noise, and she fell through, but not far, as a ledge on which her feet rested had stopped her. It felt like a step, she said, and she believed there were more underneath. Would her mother fetch a light while they threw out the rest of the rubbish and examined? In a very few moments the girls had cleared away enough to show, after the decayed splinters of wood were removed, that there were stone steps beneath, and, tucking her dress closely round her, Marion squeezed herself again into the hole and carefully crept down them, feeling her way with hands and feet. She had to stop once or twice, as the dust she stirred up in her descent

nearly choked her, and she had to keep constantly assuring her mother there was no danger. When she had nearly disappeared she held out her hand for the lamp, and Mrs. Herbert and her youngest daughter held each other's hands tightly while both entreated her not to be too venturesome, or stay below longer than a few moments. They soon heard knocking and thumping on a hard substance, and then Marion's voice as she came back again telling them there was an iron-bound door at the bottom, tightly fastened up or locked, but there was no lock or keyhole, and she had found it quite impossible to move it. Lucy then suggested that the best plan would be to send and inform Mr. Courtenay, the rector, of their discovery, as he had always been so interested in examining the old wing, and had once or twice speculated that it had been the summer residence of Tintern's abbot. Marion seconded Lucy's suggestion, and the latter was soon walking quickly to the Rectory; but she was warned by her mother to tell no one she might meet on the way, or the whole village would come to "help or hinder," said Marion.

While waiting for Mr. Courtenay, Marion gave her mother an account of her dream (she called it) of the night before, and her impression that something was to be found out in the neighbourhood of the gallery, and now she felt sure they were on the track of a secret, and were to be the means of bringing some hidden deed to the light of day. She only trusted it would not turn out to be anything dreadful, such as a murder and the discovery of the victim's body. The village would gossip if that turned out to be the case, and they would never come into the house or near it, that was quite certain. Meanwhile mother and daughter busied themselves taking out the remaining fragments from the old chest, and when, in less than half-an-hour, Lucy returned with the rector all was ready for his investigation. He was intensely interested in the discovery of the concealed stair, and pulled off his coat while Marion held the lamp, by the aid of which he proceeded to enlarge the opening in the inside of the chest. When this was done twenty stone steps could be counted, and the iron-plated door, without bolt or lock, seen. In a few moments Mr. Courtenay had gone down and stood before it. He thumped, pressed against it with all his strength, but it was quite immovable. A very heavy iron ring hung about a foot from the top, and although it could be pulled



up and down did not appear to have any connection with the door fastening ; it weighed quite four pounds, and after twirling it about for a few minutes Mr. Courtenay decided it was a useless attempt at rough ornamentation, and requested Mrs. Herbert to give him her heaviest hammer and he would try to break open the door. While she was seeking it he remained waiting at the top of the steps talking to Lucy. Marion, meantime, who had carried the candle, stood beside the door they could not open, and amused herself by throwing the light upon the walls here and there, and then taking the ring in her hand she wondered for what purpose it had been placed in that position, till hearing her mother's voice she let it slip suddenly from her fingers, when immediately there was a loud clash followed by a noise of something falling, and the door opened so suddenly that Marion only just saved herself from being precipitated into the opening by catching hold of the post next her ; the candle, falling from her hand, was extinguished. Hearing the clash made by the falling of the ring, also Marion's stumble and low cry, Mr. Courtenay ran quickly down to her, calling to Lucy to bring matches or another light. A lamp was soon passed down to him, and relighting the candle both entered through the now wide-open door into a vaulted chamber, which was like a crypt below an old church. It felt cold, but not damp ; air evidently found ingress somewhere ; the walls were covered with rudely painted frescoes representing scenes from the Old and New Testaments. At one end was a large crucifix, before it a low stone bench, and on the opposite side a rude stone altar.

Searching carefully all round the walls several recesses disclosed themselves, which had once been concealed by iron shutters painted to match the walls ; they were now dropping to pieces. Many were only hanging by the massive locks, and rusty fragments lay scattered over the stone floor. On the shelves behind were leather bags of different sizes, much decayed, and the stitching of which having rotted away, tarnished metal of some kind appeared from the openings. When Mr. Courtenay placed his hand on the heap, and gently moved it, the entire mass suddenly collapsed, and a heap of articles rolled out from the crumbling cases in all directions. There were chalice cups, alms dishes and church plate of every kind, which it did not take long to discover as being of silver and silver-gilt

Passing on to the next recess, they found a quantity of tattered pieces of silk which covered some dingy velvet boxes, which, falling to pieces as the silk rags were displaced, disclosed two small chests with crystal sides and lids, covered with metal work of elaborate design, and thickly encrusted with stones of all colours. After gently dusting these and examining both with much attention, Mr. Courtenay pronounced them to be very ancient reliquaries, and probably of great value. Searching further they found in an arch, concealed by the stone altar, a black leather case filled with coins of all values—none later than 1536—and wrapped in a gold embroidered cope on the altar itself lay a large silver-gilt cross, bearing an inscription showing it to have been the foundation gift of William, Earl of Pembroke, to the Abbey of Tintern he built at Bannow, near Wexford. History disclosed that in 1413 it had been sent to the parent monastery in England on account of the rebels destroying the country round Bannow.

In a state of great excitement Marion returned to the bottom of the steps and informed her mother of the discovered treasures, asking for a large basket in which to bring some of them up. While waiting for this the iron-bound door and its secret contrivance for fastening it was examined. It turned out to be after all very simple. The large heavy iron ring fell on a movable plate of the same metal, and in doing so knocked away a bar which had to be adjusted from an opening beneath the chest every time the chamber was left. Very quickly a portion of the treasure was placed on the table in the parlour, and all could see it was of great value and antiquity. When the dust of ages had been softly blown off the reliquaries were found to be of gold, mounted with crystal sides, and the stones were, no doubt, jewels of value; the little heaps of dust they contained could never be identified as paper, bone or rag, and it seemed possible the relics might have been removed. The silver plate, when brought up from the crypt, consisted of every article required for the furnishing of one or two altars, and during their investigation of each piece of silver Mr. Courtenay gave most valuable information to Mrs. Herbert respecting treasure trove, and told her the Crown would probably claim all, but might, perhaps, make her a present after the value was arrived at. When the old chest was examined, experts were of the opinion that it had

once undoubtedly formed an altar, and though apparently fixed to both wall and floor, it had originally moved in a groove, and could be pushed along till the entrance to the stairs came in sight on one side. Time had obliterated all traces of the groove, but the slit, wide enough to admit the adjustment of the bolt, was seen directly the chest was removed. It was very wonderful that the stairs had never been discovered.

This story has been a long one, therefore we will not linger over all the details that arose from the circumstances of the finding of the abbot's hoard. The Crown claimed all, and Mrs. Herbert delivered it up. But after the legal difficulties had been settled with the owner of house and land, the family were presented with £150. Some of the church vessels were eventually placed in our national museum, and the others were distributed to country museums, and much was sold.

In a very short time all the antiquarians in Wales, and many from England, were flocking to the Abbey House. Every one insisted on seeing the long gallery, and even crept down into the vault, and a succession of visitors wasted hours of the Herberts' time. Added to this annoyance constant streams of letters containing requests for information arrived, which if not answered directly, were often followed by the appearance of the writers in person. Under these circumstances no one was surprised that Mrs. Herbert decided to leave at the end of her six months' tenancy.

About ten days after the discovery of the treasure a letter came from Mr. Prior. On opening it two inclosures were found—and this fact is as curious as the whole story. One was for Mrs. Herbert, and expressed great astonishment at having seen in all the papers an account of the treasure trove, and regretted that business would prevent the return to Tintern of his son and himself. The other letter in the envelope was written on thin paper to an intimate friend in France, and had evidently slipped in by some strange oversight or mistake. It gave an account of the Herbert family and of all the events of the last month, with a graphic description of Marion being placed in a trance state, and ended thus: "If I had not been a stupid owl I should have looked for the Abbot's Chapel in the gallery, instead of among the ruins in the garden." Nothing more was ever seen of the father or son, but they were



heard of as holding *séances* all over the country as electro-biologists and mesmerizers.

Two years after the Herberts left Tintern an end came to the history of Abbey House. The owners, finding it would not let, and that no one would venture near it, pulled it down and built cottages with the materials on another site. The aspect of the neighbourhood is changed in all but one respect. Near the terrace walk flourishes the old chestnut tree, and the ancient yews still show signs of vigorous life by the river bank. They serve as a landmark to a generation fast passing away, who point them out as having once flourished in the garden of the Abbots of Tintern.

A. OMAN.

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# The Mystery of Oldtown Manor.

By MRS. WYNDHAM PAYNE-GALLWEY.

## CHAPTER I.

OLDTOWN MANOR was a rambling red-brick structure of sixteenth century date. Time had added to, rather than taken from, the beauty of the house, softening and mellowing its ruddy tints and throwing a veil of lichen, moss and creepers over its weather-beaten face.

The Manor had fortunately remained unrestored during three centuries of ever-varying taste: the mullioned windows were the same from which the Lady Romilly of those days had watched through blinding tears for the return of her gallant sons, who had ridden forth to the Civil Wars and laid down their young lives for the cause of their martyr king.

The trees in the park were all pollarded by Cromwell's orders, in revenge for his failure in discovering Prince Charles when he had lain a week concealed in the "Priest's Hiding Hole" at the Manor.

The gardens were laid out in the formal style beloved of Dutch William and his courtiers; one could imagine the patched and powdered belles of other days coquetting with their attendant swains as they paced the trim alleys leading to the fishponds, or lingered by the sun-dial to read its warning motto: "*Tempus fugit.*"

No wonder that Oldtown appeared a perfect treasury of historical associations to such an inexperienced girl as I was when I paid a visit to my father's cousins, Sir Conrad and Lady Romilly. Thirty years ago girls were not as independent as in these rapid, rushing days, and it was with a feeling of trepidation that I quitted my mother's wing (for the first time in all my nineteen years) and undertook the long journey into the North Riding.

It was such a complete change from our quiet Midlandshire Rectory to a great country house filled with "smart" people, as they would be called nowadays, and I felt pleasantly excited, in spite of my shyness.

I arrived at Oldtown on a warm September afternoon; the peacocks were sunning themselves on the south terrace; there

was a blaze of autumnal blossoms in the gardens, and the woods had scarcely begun to change colour.

I had never seen anything as beautiful as the old house, and my admiration knew no bounds as I entered the great oak hall, lighted by stained glass windows and hung round with family pictures, where the Romillys received me. They were a kindly, middle-aged couple, and though childless themselves, loved nothing more than the society of young people.

Although the day was so bright a log fire burned cheerfully on the open hearth, and there was nothing uncanny in the aspect of the house, nothing to account for a chill feeling which overcame me, a presentiment of sorrow which settled upon me, and I shuddered involuntarily as I followed my cousin to the pretty bedroom prepared for me. Here she left me, with injunctions to rest until dinner time, and as I gazed from my window upon the beauties of wood and lake, my nervousness abated, and when I went down to dinner in the plain white muslin, then considered the most suitable dress for a young girl, I felt quite myself again.

I was introduced to all the guests, and taken into dinner by a certain Captain Trevor. I did not then know that he was a most distinguished officer, and had won the Victoria Cross in the Crimea ; I only knew that he was the most charming person I had ever met, and I forgot all my stupid shyness under the gaze of those tender, dark eyes.

That evening flew by like a dream of happiness, and when I went to bed it was with the conviction that I should thoroughly enjoy my visit to Oldtown.

I was tired out, and slept profoundly for some hours, when I awakened suddenly with such an awful feeling of terror as I had never before experienced. I lighted my candle and listened intently for some moments, but all was quiet in the house ; not a sound to be heard except the regular ticking of the great clock on the stairs.

Unable to sleep again I got up, put on a dressing-gown and sat at the window ; it was the hour between the darkness and dawn, the saddest and most mysterious of the twenty-four.

I was a happy, careless girl, not troubled with nerves or fancies ; but as I gazed out into the eerie silence of the night, it seemed as if some terrible sadness oppressed me, and I, who had never known grief in my bright, short life, felt great tears gathering in my eyes.

Everything was calm and still ; the deer slept beneath the trees ; the moon was just sinking behind the clouds, throwing weird shadows on the water.

Was *that* a shadow, then, that white figure moving beside the lake ?

I looked, wonderingly, prepared for anything, in my excited, overwrought state. As the dim light became stronger, it appeared to me that a woman dressed in flowing white draperies was walking there with faltering steps, sometimes wringing her hands together, as if distracted with sorrow ; then, as I gazed, she vanished from my sight.

I returned to bed, trying not to dwell upon what I had seen, although my practical young mind revolted against any supernatural explanation of it. "I must have imagined it," I thought, "unless it were one of the maids walking in her sleep."

When morning came I tried to attribute the vision to a nightmare, and shrank from speaking of it to any one.

The days passed quickly in a round of amusements, and Cuthbert Trevor was always at my side, ready to forestall my slightest wish. I could not bear to think of life without him, and felt what a blank existence would seem when those earnest eyes no longer met mine.

It was a happy time, such as never occurs twice in any life, and my cup was filled to overflowing when I first heard Cuthbert say :

"Stella, I love you !"

I can recall the scene as if it were only yesterday ; we were standing under the shadow of a great weeping ash beside the lake, when he took me in his arms and told me all his love, in words which lie buried in my heart, far too sacred to be repeated here. How I loved him, my hero !

When I knew that the strong, faithful heart was all my own, life seemed as though it could contain no greater happiness.

It was then, at that blissful moment, that an icy shudder passed through me, as on my first night at the Manor, and a strange terror possessed me, which I vainly struggled against.

Then I saw, close to my side, the same shadowy, impalpable form, only now I could distinguish a wan face, with long, fair hair, hanging damp and wet about it, and blue eyes, with such an expression of melancholy as haunted my memory for many a day.

Raising a pale hand, the phantom waved it at us, as if in warning, and then vanished as suddenly as she had appeared.

I was spellbound, but Cuthbert was talking gaily, and so unmoved that I knew he had not seen anything. Was I, then the victim of some strange hallucination?

I could not speak, my lips appeared sealed, as I clung trembling to my lover's arm.

"You are shivering, darling," he exclaimed; "I must not keep you out in the damp any longer. I shall take you to Lady Romilly, and tell her what a treasure I have won," and he led me back to the house.

Our secret soon became known, and congratulations poured upon us. I was made much of by every one, and in the whirl of excitement all melancholy forebodings left my mind. Strange as it may appear, I felt that I could not speak to Cuthbert of what I had seen, although the second appearance of the figure impressed me more than I liked to acknowledge even to myself.

My cousins were delighted, and said that ours was an ideal engagement; indeed Lady Romilly said it was just what she would have wished for a daughter of her own, had she possessed one.

In the sad stillness of my present quiet life, I look at Cuthbert's ring upon my finger and recall that vanished dream. Can this weary, grey-haired woman, I sometimes wonder, be indeed the same as that young girl, crowned with every blessing, and loved by the man who was the very ideal of all her worshipped heroes of romance?

My father came, at the conclusion of my visit, to escort me home, and to make Cuthbert's acquaintance; they were mutually attracted to each other, so there were no obstacles to the course of our true love, which ran smoothly on.

At last the day of our departure came, and although sorry to leave Oldtown, the scene of so much happiness, I rejoiced at seeing my dear mother again and hearing her praises of my betrothed.

The farewells were long and tender; my cousins were loth to let me go, but promised to come to the Rectory in time for our wedding.

As we finally started I turned to wave a last farewell, and instinctively looked up to the window of the room I had

occupied, and there I saw, to my horror, pressed against the pane, the same spectral face, wearing such an expression of mortal anguish as I hope I may never witness again. I looked at my father and lover, but they were engaged in conversation, and remained quite unconscious of my blanched cheeks and startled manner.

## CHAPTER II.

CUTHBERT spent some weeks with us, and it was not until he had left and we had settled down into something like our ordinary quiet routine, that I took courage and related my weird experience to my mother.

I expected to hear a laugh or an exclamation of horror at my superstition. But, greatly to my surprise, she looked very grave and said nothing.

"Why, mother, you look as if you had heard it all before, and not one bit astonished," I cried.

"Well, dear, I have long known of the mystery of Oldtown Manor, but so many years have passed since the apparition was last seen that the Romillys hoped, and assured me, that the unquiet spirit was at rest. I believed so, or I should never have allowed you to go there, my child," she said, her voice trembling with emotion.

"Nonsense, mother; you don't really believe it was a *ghost*!" I said, feebly attempting to disbelieve the evidence of my own senses.

"I must," she answered solemnly. "Unfortunately there is no doubt as to the existence of this apparition; if only its consequences may be averted," she added, half to herself.

"What *are* the consequences? Come, now, mother, you have excited my curiosity, and I insist upon knowing all," so, with a great deal of persuasion, I drew from her the following story.

"Towards the close of the last century Oldtown belonged to Sir Everard Romilly, who, having lost his young wife there, took a dislike to the place, and lived in London with his only daughter, who was one of the beauties of Queen Charlotte's court.

The Manor was shut up and left in the charge of an old housekeeper, who had been in the service of the Romillys all her life and was devoted to their interests.



Her orphan grand-daughter, Phyllis Grey, lived with her, a lovely girl of eighteen, very well educated, as education went in those days, and of a modest, retiring disposition.

One day a letter came from Sir Everard, bidding the house-keeper prepare some rooms for the son of his friend Lord Esdaile, who was going to Oldtown, attended by his valet, for a few weeks' shooting and country air.

Mrs. Grey was much excited and pleased at the idea of once more entertaining a guest at the Manor, and received Mr. Esdaile with every possible attention. She herself was too infirm to do much for the visitor, and, as the two servants who comprised her staff were uncouth country girls, she made Phyllis wait upon him, believing, in her simplicity, that any friend of Sir Everard's must be a man of honour.

Unfortunately Harold Esdaile was one of the dissipated companions of the Prince Regent, and, though very handsome and fascinating, was selfish and unprincipled to the last degree.

He was deeply in debt, and obliged to leave town for a time, while his father arranged with his creditors, with a view to his becoming a suitor for the hand of the beautiful Geraldine Romilly.

He saw in Phyllis a distraction for the dull weeks of his enforced absence from his usual haunts, and she, young, inexperienced and innocent, was completely fascinated by the fashionable *roué*, who professed the most passionate love for her.

At last a secret marriage took place ; Harold Esdaile signed a fictitious name in the register, believing that by doing so the ceremony would not be a binding one (but he afterwards discovered that this was not the case, and that it would render any subsequent marriage illegal).

When his stay at Oldtown came to an end, he had wearied of his low-born wife, and he hastened to town, where he paid the most assiduous court to Geraldine Romilly, trusting to chance to free him from his country entanglement.

Poor Phyllis drooped and pined as months went by and she heard nothing of her faithless husband. She had no friend in whom to confide her sorrows, and her grandmother, growing daily blinder and more childish and possessed of only one dominant idea (the expected return of Sir Everard to the Manor), paid no attention to her altered looks.

I have seen Phyllis's little diary, blotted with bitter tears, and telling the whole story in pathetic, broken sentences.

At last the time came when she felt that her marriage must no longer be concealed, and she wrote to Harold Esdaile a letter from her very heart, praying him to acknowledge his forsaken wife before it was too late, or at least permit her to tell all to her grandmother.

This touching appeal brought forth only the briefest and coldest of replies from her husband, bidding her meet him on a certain evening, under the ash tree by the lake, when he would see what could be done.

That day the housekeeper heard from her master of his daughter's engagement to Mr. Esdaile, and that they would immediately return to the Manor, where the marriage was to take place without delay.

As her old grandmother slowly spelt out the letter containing this crushing intelligence, Phyllis listened in horrified silence, almost doubting the evidence of her own senses.

Then she rose and glided from the room, to keep her appointment with her husband, and from that interview she never returned.

Detectives were then unknown, and although a hue and cry was next day raised, no traces of the missing girl could be found.

The great event of Sir Everard's return took place within a few days of Phyllis' disappearance, and the fate of an insignificant country girl seemed of slight importance to any one but her grandmother, in the excitement that followed.

The Manor was filled with guests, and preparations for the wedding were pushed on with all possible speed.

The wedding day dawned dark and cheerless ; the bride looked pale and melancholy in the morning, and in answer to her father's anxious inquiries she said that her sleep had been troubled by a terrible dream.

Her bridesmaids pressed her to relate it, and at length she said reluctantly :

" I dreamed that I was standing at the altar with Harold, but dressed in the deepest mourning ; the church was hung with black, and the guests looked like the dead.

" The ceremony went on until Harold was about to place the ring upon my finger, and then a cold hand came between us and



snatched it away. It all seemed so real, and I awoke feeling as if that icy hand were clutching at my heart," and she shuddered as she spoke.

It was a superstitious age, and the hearers were more affected by the narrative than they liked to show, but they laughed it off and led her away to dress her for her bridal.

The old villagers used to say that a lovelier bride than Geraldine Romilly was never seen, but the bridegroom was as white as the powder in his hair; his hands shook, and he glanced nervously about him as he stood at the altar. The onlookers remarked that he had none of the triumphant air to be expected of a man who was marrying, not only the most celebrated beauty of her day, but also the greatest heiress in all England.

The bells rang out with a joyous peal as Harold Esdaile led his bride to the carriage, and his face looked less clouded; but as they reached the gate the wedding procession was suddenly confronted by another.

Four labourers were hastening through the park, carrying a ghastly burden on a rudely contrived hurdle; it was the body of Phyllis Grey.

Her long fair hair trailed upon the ground with water dripping from it, the blue eyes stared stonily into vacancy, one hand hung limply down.

"It is the cold hand of that dreadful dream," exclaimed the bride, as she shrank back, looking to her husband for sympathy in her terror, but he was glaring at the body, with the wild, despairing gaze of one whose sin had indeed found him out.

"Turn your eyes away, Phyllis," he yelled; "turn them away, and I will confess all. Yes, you were indeed my wife, and I *murdered* you;" and breaking from those who would have restrained him he rushed madly away, leaving the spectators transfixed with horror.

Geraldine sank fainting upon the ground, and a scene of the greatest confusion ensued.

That was an awful night at Oldtown Manor; the wind howled round the house, the thunder pealed, and vivid flashes of lightning lit up the room where the pale corpse lay; the same room where she had dreamed her girlish dreams of love, all unconscious of the terrible fate awaiting her.

In her desk they found ample proof of the truth of Esdaile's

self-accusing words, and the wedding ring that she had never dared to wear in life was reverently placed on her cold finger ere they bore her to the old churchyard.

The next morning some shepherds, returning from the moor, brought word that in a snow drift, cold and dead, they had found the body of Harold Esdaile.

Nemesis had overtaken him as he fled madly from the consequences of his crime, and he had perished miserably, with only the night winds to sing his requiem.

Geraldine never recovered from the shock, and died within a few weeks of her fatal wedding day ; her heartbroken father did not long survive her.

The Manor passed to a distant cousin, who did his best to hush up the whole tragic story ; but poor Phyllis's spirit seems unable to rest, and has always appeared once to a generation, to some maiden of Romilly race ; "and they say," here my mother's voice faltered, "that it portends a disastrous ending to that girl's love story. It has always been so hitherto. Oh, that I had never allowed you to go to Oldtown, my Stella ; it was very, very wrong of me."

Her emotion impressed me, in spite of myself, though I tried to make a jest of it, and threatened to tell Cuthbert that she had been frightening me with ghost stories.

Our wedding was to be early in the New Year, and I was much occupied with my preparations, and had but few moments for anxious thought. Still there *were* times when the spectre's warnings would recur to my mind, filling me with sudden fear ; but I was always reassured by Cuthbert's daily letter, telling me of his well-being and unaltered love.

The settlements and other business detained Cuthbert in London until Christmas Eve.

It was a bright, frosty day, and I drove to the station to meet him,—but there had been an accident to his train, and so I never saw my darling again, and have lived through all these weary years, a sad and silent woman, whose joys are all in the past.

I never visited the Manor again, but believe that since it passed into a stranger's possession its spectre has not appeared to any one.

## The Face on the Wall.

IN the summer of 18— Major and Mrs. Crosbie returned from India and took a large house in one of the most lovely of the Yorkshire dales, on a three years' lease. It was a wild and solitary spot, but they particularly desired to live quietly in order to re-establish Major Crosbie's health, which had been much impaired by a long residence in the tropics ; so that in their opinion, the isolated position of the house was no drawback. The house, which faced due south, was a square three-storied edifice of grey stone ; in front, a lovely lawn stretched away in a gentle slope to a brook which ran through the garden ; east and west were two plantations of hoary weather-beaten pines, which on the west side sheltered a spacious kitchen garden, while on the east it stretched itself into an avenue of half-a-mile or more in length, at the end of which was the principal entrance. Immediately behind the house was a large square yard, round which were built the stables and the various outbuildings, and at the back of these ran the high road, beyond which was a vast expanse of breezy heather-covered moorland.

Owing to its lonely position, the house had been uninhabited for many years ; but, although showing signs of neglect, it was in pretty good repair, so that in a few months, under the energetic and artistic influence of the Crosbies, combined with a lavish expenditure of money, it had assumed a cheery and homelike appearance. Such neighbours as they had soon called on them ; but the distances between the different country houses was a very real barrier to any great intimacies, more especially as winter sets in early in our northern counties and the roads are *all* bad. Fortunately, the Crosbies were talented and accomplished people, with many resources in themselves, so that the lack of society did not trouble them so much as it might otherwise have done. Besides which the events which I am about to relate proved to be of most absorbing interest whilst they lasted.

The summer and autumn had passed rapidly away, and at the time my story begins it was the middle of November.

Mrs. Crosbie, a pretty little fair-haired woman, was sitting one evening after dinner with her feet on the fender-stool, plunged in a brown study; a dainty piece of silken embroidery lay neglected on the white bear rug at her feet in company with her fox-terrier Vic. Her elbow on her knee and her chin in her hand, she sat motionless, gazing at the fire, when the door opened and her husband came in.

"Why, Ethel, what are you thinking about?" he asked with a smile. "You are so preoccupied that you have forgotten my coffee."

"That is soon remedied," answered Mrs. Crosbie, stretching out her hand to the bell. "The fact is, I was debating whether I should tell you or not."

"Tell me what?" inquired Jack Crosbie, drawing an arm-chair to the fire and sinking into it lazily.

"Well, something rather queer that has happened the last two or three nights and that I can in no way account for."

"It sounds dreadfully mysterious," said her husband, smiling. "If it is anything very gruesome you had better not tell me, for fear of spoiling my night's rest."

Mrs. Crosbie smiled rather soberly, but did not at once answer.

The footman brought in the coffee, and while sipping it slowly, she said:

"If I could feel certain that it was merely imagination I should not say anything about it."

"Oh! never mind the *ifs*," replied her husband somewhat impatiently. "Begin at the beginning, and say what is the matter."

"If you really want to know, then," said Mrs. Crosbie reluctantly, "for the last four or five nights I have been hearing voices!"

Her husband laughed. "What kind of voices?" he asked, "and when?"

"At night, when I am in bed," continued Ethel. "It is most extraordinary. Every night I hear two people talking in the smoking-room" (which was immediately beneath Mrs. Crosbie's bedroom). "I can hear them quite distinctly, but I cannot distinguish any words. At first, I thought some of the servants must be sitting up talking in the kitchen, and had left the passage door open. I got up to see, but everything was quiet,

and all the lights were out. As soon as I got back into bed the noise began again. Last night I got up three or four times, thinking each time I *must* have been mistaken, and that the maids were sitting up, but it was not so. It really does seem rather funny."

Major Crosbie smiled a little and said :

"You are sure you were not dreaming, Ethel?"

"Perfectly certain," replied Mrs. Crosbie. "Don't I tell you that I got up and walked about?"

"At what time do these mysterious voices begin?" asked her husband.

"At eleven o'clock; they go on for an hour and a half or thereabouts, and then they stop."

"Well, to-night I will bring a book and sit in your room, and if I hear anything I will go and investigate."

Mrs. Crosbie's bedroom opened into that of her husband on one side and into the passage on the other; the windows of both rooms looked out on to the lawn and were immediately above the smoking and dining rooms; they were all large and lofty square rooms which did not lend themselves structurally to any mystifications. At eleven o'clock Jack Crosbie entered his wife's room. He found her sitting in her dressing-gown by the fire with a pink shaded reading lamp on a table at her side.

"How about the voices, so far?" he asked, as he sat down opposite to her.

"Oh! they have not begun yet," replied Mrs. Crosbie.

"And I don't suppose they ever will, save in your imagination," he replied.

"Well, we shall soon see," said his wife, smiling.

They chatted on indifferent subjects for a few minutes and then betook themselves to their respective books. Silence, unbroken save for the turning of the pages, reigned over the house; the wind sighed faintly in the pines, but all else was still, when, suddenly, a confused sound of voices broke out seemingly in one of the ground-floor rooms. Major Crosbie raised his head to listen and exclaimed :

"Why, my dear Ethel, if those are your mysterious voices, you are even more foolish than I thought you were; that is Janet apparently enjoying a somewhat noisy altercation with Wright on the stairs."

"You had better go and tell them to be quiet and send them off to bed," replied Mrs. Crosbie carelessly. "They will be coming up the back stairs."

Her husband left the room, and she sat watching the door with an amused smile on her lips. In a few minutes he returned looking slightly mystified.

"Well, did you tell them?" she asked with a laugh.

"They were not there at all," said Major Crosbie. "The lights are all out, and there is not a sound to be heard in the whole house."

"Well, listen now," answered his wife.

They listened and again the confused murmur became perceptible; two voices seemed to be talking, arguing, entreating, threatening, and gradually rising in wrath till the climax of the discussion seemed to have been reached, and they relapsed into silence. What was so curious and made the thing so uncanny was, that although the voices themselves were perfectly distinct, it was quite impossible to distinguish any words whatever. After an interval of about ten minutes, the whole thing began again. The Crosbies sat looking at one another in silence for some time; at last Mrs. Crosbie said in a half-whisper:

"Do you still think I am silly?"

"It is certainly very mysterious," replied her husband, "but it is absurd to fancy it is due to supernatural causes; there *must* be some reason for it. Most probably it is the wind forcing its way down some old chimney or pipe that we know nothing of. I will make a thorough investigation to-morrow; in the meanwhile, you had better go to bed, and if you are frightened, I will sit here till you get to sleep."

"Oh! I am not frightened," replied Ethel, "but it is not nearly finished yet; it goes on at intervals like this for about an hour and a half. There it is again." And as she spoke, the uncanny conversation was resumed; two voices seemed to be taking part in it; one, a woman's voice, soft and sweet, with agonizing tones of entreaty, which at times became shrill and sharp with terror; the other, a man's voice, low, rough and husky, with cruel intonations and savage inflections. What could they be talking about? was always the question present in Mrs. Crosbie's mind, dominating even her fear, for although she would not own to it, she really was frightened. At half-past twelve the sounds ceased altogether and the Crosbies retired to rest.



The next day, Major Crosbie, assisted by his valet (who had been his soldier-servant when with his regiment), made a thorough and exhaustive inspection of the whole house, but discovered nothing that could in any way account for the extraordinary occurrence of the previous night. The smoking-room was most carefully examined, but presented no peculiar features, beyond the fact that on the left-hand side of the fireplace was a deep recess, and that on the right-hand side there was none, the wall being flush with the fireplace. There being no cupboard in the room adjoining to account for the extra thickness of the wall in that place, Major Crosbie was fain to believe that it was merely a builder's freak, and was unable to connect it, even in the remotest manner, with the sounds which he sought to explain. He felt quite at a loss, but determined to sit up again that evening in company with Wright, intending to search the smoking-room thoroughly as soon as the voices began.

He persuaded his wife to change bedrooms with him, which she was pleased to do, and whilst enjoining the strictest secrecy on Wright, he told him he would be wanted to share in the vigil. Accordingly, eleven o'clock found master and man awaiting the beginning of the ghostly conversation, each armed with a bull's-eye lantern. They had not long to wait ; it seemed to take place exactly beneath them, near the fireplace, on the side where there was no recess : arguing, entreating, imploring, menacing, threatening, and then the dead silence ; to begin all over again after a short interval.

After having heard it once or twice, they started on an inspection tour all round the house, but everything was perfectly quiet until they came to the smoking-room. Wright opened the door and stood aside, holding the handle to let the major pass in. As soon as they were fairly in the room, they became aware that this was the place in which the mysterious persons, or rather voices, conversed. A dreadful feeling seemed to convince them that they were not alone in the room : some invisible presence seemed to be there filling them with inexplicable terror. Moved by the same impulse, they turned the light of their lanterns on the place close to them whence the voices seemed to come ; but there was nothing : still the confused murmur went on, perfectly audible as to sound, quite indistinguishable as to words, until, the usual climax having been reached, it died into silence. At the

same moment, the light in both lanterns was suddenly extinguished, and Major Crosbie felt his arm tightly gripped by Wright, who whispered :

“ Oh ! sir, look on the wall ; look on the wall.”

Major Crosbie turned round and saw on the wall, at the right-hand side of the fireplace, a most peculiar apparition. It was a rather small blueish-white spot, which quivered and wavered about like a trembling ray of moonshine ; but as he looked, it gained in intensity and ceased to move. He was thus enabled to make out the semblance of a hand, a woman's hand, thin and emaciated, the palm turned outwards, the finger tips torn and bleeding, and the joints strained and tense as if the hand were pushing against something with all its might. It was about six feet from the ground, and nothing else, save a couple of inches of delicate ivory-white wrist, was visible.

Dumb with amazement, Major Crosbie stared speechlessly at the little hand, wondering if by any chance he could be asleep and dreaming. Almost at his elbow, the ghostly voices once more began their altercation, but he was so engrossed in looking at the hand that he scarcely noticed them. Wright was in a dreadful fright and clung hard to his master's arm as the only refuge against the overpowering sense of creeping horror which had come over them both. Suddenly, the voices having again ceased, after having reached their usual angry climax, the two men became aware that about a foot below the apparition of the hand another object had become visible. It was a face ; a woman's face, pale and drawn and filled with an agonizing look of terror ; horror-stricken, the dark grey eyes gazed straight at them, the pupils dilated with helpless fear ; the lovely curved lips were pinched and drawn up over the small white teeth ; a mass of golden curls hung low on her forehead. Breathless, the two men gazed at the face on the wall until the speechless horror it expressed seemed to communicate itself to them, and with one impulse, sick with fright, utterly incapable of saying how they got there, they found themselves outside the smoking-room in the passage. Silently they went up the stairs to Major Crosbie's bedroom, and it was not until they found themselves there that either of them cared to speak.

By this time they had been able to collect their senses and Major Crosbie was rather ashamed of his precipitate retreat.



"Well, Wright," he said, "and what did you see?"

"Faith, sir, I'm thinking I saw just what you did," said Wright seriously, "and a mighty queer thing it was too!"

"How was it our lanterns went out so suddenly?" asked Major Crosbie.

"They didn't go out, sir," answered Wright; "they were *put* out."

"Well, I have had enough ghost hunting for one night," said his master, "so I shall go to bed now and you had better do the same. We will have a good search all over the house to-morrow and I will go and ask the agent if this house is supposed to be haunted. In the meantime, be careful not to say anything about what we saw either to Mrs. Crosbie or to the maids."

The next day, the whole house, and more particularly the smoking-room, was submitted to a more searching investigation than the former one, with the same fruitless result. The agent, when questioned, denied any knowledge of the house being haunted, and, in fact, made sarcastic remarks which somewhat nettled Major Crosbie, knowing, as he did, that he had been most thoroughly alarmed. Mrs. Crosbie was naturally very anxious to hear the result of the midnight vigil, but to her disappointment, she found both her husband and the man servant singularly reticent on the subject.

On the following day, two of Major Crosbie's former brother officers arrived for a few weeks' shooting, and in the bustle attendant on their arrival the peculiarities of the smoking-room were forgotten until the evening, when they all adjourned thither, for their post-prandial smoke. The clock striking eleven recalled the event to Major Crosbie's recollection.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, "I hope neither of you fellows are afflicted with nerves, because we run a regular ghost show in this room and it is just about this time that the performance begins."

His friends looked slightly incredulous, and he gave them a rapid sketch of what had taken place the evening before.

"Oh, we must see this out," exclaimed Captain Lawrence gaily. "You had better call Wright and we will make a night of it. What did you say?" he asked quickly of Major Crosbie.

"I did not say anything," replied the major, looking slightly surprised.

"Oh, I thought I heard some one speak, so concluded it was you."

"It is more likely to be our invisible friends," returned Jack Crosbie, lowering his voice slightly. A slight pause ensued, during which the voices became distinctly audible; the two newcomers listened in amazement, looking all round the room to discover whence the voices proceeded, but of course they saw nothing.

"We will keep the lamps lit," said Major Crosbie, "and that will enable us to see if there is any humbug going on." Hardly were the words out of his mouth when all three lamps went out and the voices began again. At the same time, the hand became distinctly visible on the wall opposite and a few minutes after the face. Major Crosbie experienced the same awful sensation of horror creeping over him and felt certain that the two others were similarly affected. Silently they sat, watching the entreating, agonized expression of the beautiful face and the awful terror in the dark grey eyes; so intense was the feeling they inspired that all three men ceased to think of the face as a ghostly one, but almost imagined that it was a real person, suffering untold cruelties, which they seemed forced by some invisible power to witness without being able to prevent. The minutes sped on, each one increasing the sickening fear and horror which possessed the spectators, until with one accord they made for the door and found themselves pale and trembling in the passage.

"Great Scott," said Captain Lawrence, "what was it? I would not go through that again for something. Have you no idea what it is, Crosbie?"

"Not the slightest," replied the major. "And what is more, I am at a loss to account for the awful sensation of fright which seizes on one by degrees. The face alone does not produce that effect, as I do not feel in the least alarmed by it; but there is some strange sort of presence in the room which is terrible and which, I am bound to say, paralyses me with fear."

"Yes, I also had the sensation you describe," rejoined Colonel Wheeler, "and I account for it in this way: I am certain we were not alone in that room; there was some other ghostly presence and a malevolent one to boot. How otherwise account for the intense sympathy with that agonized, terrified face, followed by the utter horror and dread, which gave one the sensation of being helpless spectators of some awful crime? It was really

horrible and I am not ashamed to say that I was in a most terrible funk."

"It will be best for all of us to try and forget it in sleep," said Major Crosbie, "and to-morrow, I will have that wall pulled down to see if we can account for this ghastly vision in any way. If not, we must leave the house, for one really cannot go on living with that sort of thing happening every night ; it would be altogether too wearing."

The trio separated for the night and the next morning found them busily assisting the mason who had come to pull down the wall. When they had reached the centre, they came upon a little sort of cell about two feet square and six feet high ; there was just room for one man to stand upright in it without moving. On the floor they found the bones of a human skeleton, which on examination proved to be those of a female. This discovery rather staggered the finders, but it confirmed their opinion that some terrible crime or tragedy had taken place in the house. Was it possible that the body of some murdered victim had been disposed of in that little cell ? or, more awful still, had she been buried alive in it ? Something of the sort must certainly have taken place to account for the bones being there at all. Major Crosbie had them carefully removed and buried in a remote corner of the churchyard, and from that time the smoking-room was free of the dreadful sights and the spectral voices. But somehow or other, the house never felt comfortable, and very shortly after the discovery of the skeleton, Major and Mrs. Crosbie left for the south, forfeiting the remainder of their lease. Their ostensible reason was the severity of the northern climate, but in reality, they never felt quite sure that they might not, at some future date, see once again the face on the wall.

ELAINE A. SWIRE.

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# The Curse of the Child.

IN TWO PARTS.

## PART I.

### HOW IT WAS GIVEN.

IT seems a strange thing to begin the happiest years of one's life, under the shadow, and in the very midst of the fulfilment of a curse.

In these enlightened days, it appears heathenish, not to say altogether impossible, to believe that such a thing as a doom, or a warning, or a fate, prophesied in the dark ages hundreds of years ago, can possibly exert the slightest influence over the lives of sensible people ; I, for one, had always laughed at such superstitions with a healthy incredulity. But I was destined to learn that over some minds even yet, omens and forecasts have as much power now as ever they had, and that to believe a thing *is*, amounts practically to creating it !

It was on a bright spring evening that I first came face to face with a problem entirely new in my experience. I was staying with my grandparents in Somersetshire. The village of which my grandfather was rector lay at the foot of a long hill, gently sloping up towards a belt of fir-trees ; and I was very fond of climbing to the top of this hill to enjoy the beautiful sunsets visible from the heights. On one of these occasions, just as I had reached my favourite perch, a stile at the side of the roadway, half hidden with the trailing branches of honeysuckle and wild rose in their first bravery of green, a smart dog-cart passed me, going at a good pace down the hill. A young man (handsome of course !) was driving, and a pale pretty girl was by his side. In my brief glimpse of her I could not fail to be struck by the intense sadness of her expression ; her dark eyes seemed to be looking before her almost as if she saw something that appalled her in the distance ; and yet she was answering cheerfully enough some remark her companion had just made. A groom sat behind, and I recognized that he wore the Barrie livery. I had stayed often enough at the Rectory to know that the Barries were the great people of the neighbourhood ; but I knew also that they lived much abroad, and that Barries' Court was generally in the hands of a few servants.

Old Mr. Barrie had died lately, his wife having pre-deceased him many years, and the family consisted but of one son and two daughters. Girl-like, the moment I saw them, I began to speculate as to whether they had come to live at home now for any length of time, and if so, whether I should be likely to make their acquaintance. Why did that girl look so terribly sad and frightened? Was her brother unkind to her? But no, he seemed far too prepossessing to be anything but "nice;" and with this very school-girlish approbation uppermost in my mind, I did a correspondingly school-girlish action, and climbed to the top bar of the stile to watch their further progress down the hill. What a fine broad-shouldered man he was, and what a trim figure and daintily-poised head she had! Ah, what had happened? At the first instant I thought that sudden giddiness was overtaking me, or that an earthquake wave was passing under the hill-side, and then I realized that the chestnut, with its coat of satin, and its beautiful action, and its perfectly-appointed harness, had ignominiously stumbled and gone down: that, in fact, there was a complete smash, and I was the only one available to render assistance!

I suppose I ran; I know that in another instant I was in the middle of the group, panting and terrified, but gasping out, "Sit on his head; sit on his head!" in a manner which made the grave groom smile in spite of his consternation.

"I'll mind the 'orse, miss, if you'll go to the young lady," he said; "don't you be afraid of the 'orse, 'e won't do nothing. But for the Lord's sake see to Miss Barrie, for I believe she's fainted!" I looked about me hastily.

Mr. Barrie was leaning breathless against the hedge, wiping some blood from his face; and in an opposite direction, on the hard road, lay his sister with eyes wide open, looking, it seemed to me, straight up into the very depths of the sky.

As I bent over her, she spoke a few words faintly, but I could not understand her meaning.

"The curse, Christopher; it is the curse; I knew it would come!"

Her words and manner terrified me.

"Are you much hurt?" I ventured, feeling that it was a feeble question, and yet not knowing what to say.

"Let me help you to sit up. It is all right; nobody is killed; don't be frightened."



For as I raised her she looked at me with such piteous terror in her face that I began to fear for her reason.

"Theo, dearest, are any bones broken? Tell me what you feel. See, I am quite right, and Jervis jumped off without a scratch. Stand up, my darling, and let's see at least that you are whole and sound."

Mr. Barrie came behind her, so that she should not remark the gash upon his head; and with his aid and mine, she struggled to rise, but the effort evidently caused her intense pain.

"Let me lie down again," she moaned, and then under her breath, once more I heard her say, "The curse, the curse; it has come at last!" Next moment she lay unconscious, and as one dead, in my arms.

"We must get help at once," said Mr. Barrie. "The Vernons at the Rectory, I am sure they would do anything."

"I am certain they would," I cried eagerly. "Mr. Vernon is my grandfather. Let me run at once and tell them. The gardener shall come, and he and your groom can carry her down easily."

It did not take long to arrange matters.

In less than a quarter-of-an-hour I found myself, with my grandmother, in a cab from the village inn, supporting as best we could the senseless form of poor Miss Barrie; and making a slow progress through the twilight towards her home. Our gardener had been dispatched for the doctor; the groom was attending to the chestnut's injuries, which were not very serious, in our stable; and Mr. Barrie, on grandfather's fat pony, was riding on in advance to get things ready at Barries' Court. We had tried to persuade them to remain at the Rectory; and I think grandmamma was glad, while I was sorry at the refusal. Young people like excitement, even though it be of a tragic kind; but the accommodation under the modest Rectory gables would certainly have been limited, and our style of living not of the sort to which the Barries of Barries' Court were accustomed. The girl looked very beautiful in her unconsciousness, but painfully fragile too. Grandmamma shook her head silently as she bent over her.

"What did she mean about the curse?" I whispered once, with those strange words repeating themselves persistently in my head. "Do you know, Granny?"

The only answer was a portentous "Hush," and a solemn forefinger uplifted in warning.

We had just jolted over a stone, and a slight contraction in Miss Barrie's white forehead showed that she was not altogether insensible to outside influences.

I relapsed into silence, wondering ; and so we came in between the great stone gate posts, and under an avenue of elms, where rooks were settling themselves in and about their nests, which showed like ragged black spots against a cold primrose-tinted sky.

Mr. Barrie was on the door-step, with his youngest sister beside him. Behind was a crowd of servants, and the doctor came up just as we reached the portico. There was some natural commotion, a subdued expression of grief and pity ; and then they all melted away as it were towards the great staircase, and I was left alone in the wide hall, where the shadows gathered thickly among coats of mail, and costly china, and foreign monstrosities of all sorts, which were displayed in picturesque confusion on every side.

Grandmamma had dismissed the cab, saying that we would walk home later ; she had followed the sad procession up to Miss Barrie's room, but I felt that I was not wanted there, and so I sat forlornly in the hall, feeling not a little strange and uncomfortable. Again, as the old housekeeper saw her mistress carried in, had I caught a whisper of those mysterious words : "The curse, it is the curse at last !" and a thrill of superstitious fear ran through me. It was quite a comfort, when one of the big dogs, that had been wandering, evidently ill at ease, outside on the gravel, came in, and up to me, to lay his warm brown head upon my lap. I was fondling his ears gratefully, and wishing with all my heart that some one with the power of speech would arrive, to break the long-continued silence, when I heard the sound of quick footsteps, and perceived that the younger Miss Barrie was coming down the wide oak staircase. As I recognized her white dress by the pale light still entering at the open door I rose impulsively.

"Oh, how is your sister now ? I do hope she is better ? What does the doctor say ?"

I always had a way of asking several questions at once, and perhaps I may have startled Miss Barrie by my suddenness.

She drew in her breath sharply, and clasped her hands for an instant, with a gesture that was almost despairing, before she replied :

"We cannot tell yet. Dr. Armstrong fears the spine is hurt. They have sent me out of the room. It is strange, when one's dearest are *in extremis*, strangers may be with them and we are shut out!" She gave a sort of little laugh, but there was no mirth in it. "You are Miss Vernon?" she went on questioningly. "Then why are you left here in the dark and cold! Please forgive our neglect. Come this way." She led me across the hall into a pretty morning-room, where a cheerful fire was burning in the grate. Instinctively we both approached it, not that we were cold, but the sense of its comfort and warmth was very pleasant just then. She put me into a deep low chair and sank down upon the hearth-rug. There was a sort of hopeless calm about her which surprised me; she was evidently very young, and the terrible accident which threatened her only sister's life would naturally, I thought, have greatly unnerved her. At least, I knew that if any of my beloved ones had been involved in such a catastrophe I could not sit silently, as she did, for the next few minutes, gazing into the glowing coals without a sign of tears in her large blue eyes. Her silence urged me to speak, and I began with an apology for my presence.

"My grandmother sent away the cab; I am waiting to walk home with her. I wonder if she will be long?"

Miss Barrie had seemingly forgotten my presence for the moment, and she turned to me with a somewhat bewildered air.

"Your grandmother? Oh, yes, of course. Mrs. Vernon, the old lady with the white hair. Do you want her? Don't take her away just yet; Theo has tight hold of her hand, and we could not separate them. I fancy Theo thinks that she is her own dear grandmother, who died years ago. She had snowy curls just like that. I am sure she will stay if it is the least comfort to Theo, won't she?"

She spoke pleadingly, and I hastened to assure her that I would not urge our departure for the world.

"Christopher has telegraphed for Sir Edward Lancing, but it is useless," the girl continued, letting her eyes stray back once more to the fire. "Theo and I were quite prepared for this; and Christopher was, too, in spite of himself; but he will not



allow that he believes things of this sort. She will be twenty-one on Wednesday in next week !”

It flashed across my mind that the youngest Miss Barrie was a little off her head, so unintelligible was this speech to me : perhaps the shock had been too much for her. I felt more and more uncomfortable, but thought it wisest to keep up some sort of conversation.

“ You are several years younger ? ” I hazarded, noting how the firelight played on her silky fair hair and the childish beauty of her complexion. “ I should guess you to be about seventeen ? ”

“ I am past eighteen,” she answered ; “ there are hardly three years between us.”

“ But your sister looks older than one-and-twenty, doesn’t she ? I only saw her face for a minute before—before it all happened, but I saw that she seemed very pale and sad.”

“ How can she help it ? ” cried the girl, flushing up into more animation than I had perceived her to show yet.

“ It is a terrible thing to look at death so close when you are young, and well, and strong ! And Theo has so much to make life happy, so much, so much—and she dreads dying horribly ! ”

“ But she is not going to die,” I said, trying to speak cheerfully, for Miss Barrie had hidden her face in her hands. “ I can’t think why you should despair all at once. People get over much worse accidents than hers every day. I daresay by the time her birthday comes she will be——” “ Almost well,” I intended saying, but Miss Barrie interrupted me.

“ By the time her birthday comes—she will be *dead*,” she said, in a low earnest tone that carried conviction in it and made me thrill with a nameless dread.

“ Have you never heard of the Barries’ curse, the curse of the child ? Ah, you don’t live here, and your grandfather, I daresay, does not believe in such things, though clergymen used to in the old days.” She paused, thinking deeply, but my curiosity was now fully awakened.

“ I know nothing ; do tell me ! What is the curse and what has it to do with you ? ” I asked eagerly.

Somehow I felt as if our modern surroundings were altogether out of place, and that we should be sitting in a “ baronial hall,” with rushes for our carpet, and mysterious whisperings of the wind behind the arras as an accompaniment to the speaker’s voice.

"It happened somewhere in the fifteenth century," she said, half under her breath, while I bent forward to listen. "There were Barries, of Barries' Court, even then, and there was a beautiful Elinor Barrie once, who lived here. Not in this very house, of course, but in one which stood just on the same spot; and on her twenty-first birthday, this Elinor Barrie was riding out at the great gates with her friends, talking and laughing, when she saw a beggar-woman waiting in the road with a child. The woman held up the child to beg, and it put its little hands upon Elinor's skirt and prayed for food. But the horse was startled, and reared; and Elinor, who was always, they say, very proud and passionate, struck the child with her whip, and bade them both be off out of the way for insolent ne'er-do-weels. And then the woman held the baby's hands up towards heaven and made it repeat after her the terrible words of the curse. It was a tiny little creature of between two and three years old, so thin and small, it looked as if the wind would blow it away, but it could speak plainly. I cannot tell you the words, they are too awful, but she cursed the Barries, root and branch, and she said that no woman of their race should ever live to twenty-one, and none of them should ever have a child to call her mother. And every word that she said the little child repeated, holding up its hands to the sky. They say that Elinor rode away laughing, and her friends with her; but on her way back, as they were crossing a ford, her horse stepped in a hole, and he and his rider were drowned; and as they carried home the Lady Elinor, there at the gate lay the beggar-woman and the child dead, too, dead of starvation and misery!"

"What a terrible old legend," I said, with a shiver. "I wonder how much truth there is in it."

"This much," said Miss Barrie, turning round and facing me with almost unearthly-looking eyes. "This much—that what the child said has been fulfilled, every word of it. No daughter of the Barries' house ever lived to be more than one-and-twenty. Some of them thought lightly of the curse; they were married early, they even had children, but before the babies learned to speak, the mothers always died; some of accidents, some of illnesses, some of a kind of wasting. Oh! it is all true, horribly, cruelly true, and now Theo's fate has come; and within three years—mine must come too!"

"Oh, I can't, I won't believe it," I cried impulsively, seizing her hand. "Such things are not allowed. Why should generations of women suffer because one was proud and passionate? You do away with the goodness of God when you believe in such cruelty as that."

"Christopher says the same," said Miss Barrie, with a wan little attempt at a smile. "Every one says the same who is not of the Barrie women-kind. And with each one that dies, people say, 'She is the last, and the curse is all nonsense. It was a fever or an accident that might happen to anybody,' and they tell us not to think of it. As if thinking made any difference!"

"People do frighten themselves to death, though, sometimes," I said. "Grandmamma had a cook once——"

Miss Barrie gave a slight movement of impatience, and then continued, almost to herself: "I talked with an old, old woman who lived in the alms-house, down in the village. She was past ninety, and the neighbours told all sorts of strange stories about her power of second-sight, and her charms for curing diseases. She had heard of the curse from her mother and her grandmother; some of her people had always been in the Barrie service, and they knew all the tradition. 'My dear,' she used to say, and she would lay her old shrivelled fingers upon mine and draw me close to whisper in my ear, 'My dear, the same power that brought the sorrow can lift it away. With a child's hand was the curse given, and only a child's hand shall take it back again.' I never knew what she meant, I was only a child myself then, and I could not get her to answer my questions coherently. She died one year when we were abroad, long ago now."

"It seems a heathenish idea," I said musingly. "Did your mother believe in it too?"

"She struggled against the belief," said Miss Barrie "and very, very seldom would she talk of it. Indeed, she meant to have kept it from us altogether, only Theo found the story mentioned in some family records, and asked her all about it. Then she said that life and death were in God's hands, and not in the power of human words, and she told us that she had named Theo as she did, to remind herself continually of that. So that if it pleased Him to take her away first, mother might be able to say 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

"And you, what are you called?" I asked.

"Dear mother, she could not hide from herself that there was some sort of danger hanging over us, though she would not let us talk of it, and she called me Hope. But names are not much use. What is the good of hoping, when one sees the inevitable end?"

I knew not what to answer her. I grew cold in the warm blaze, thinking of the dead and gone girls who had met their different ends so early. Was there no escape for these, either? A slight bustle in the hall disturbed us, and Mr. Barrie entered, with a telegram in his hand.

"Sir Edwin will be here by the first train in the morning, Hope," he said, scarcely noticing my presence. "Will you give orders to have a room ready and some breakfast? I will send the brougham to the station. His train comes in at 5.20."

"How is Theo now?" asked Hope, glancing up at the clock, which pointed towards ten.

"Still unconscious," said her brother. "By the way, that kind old lady, Mrs. Vernon, has offered to stay the night here, and she wants her granddaughter to go home and tell the rector. You are Miss Vernon, I suppose?" turning suddenly upon me.

"Yes," I answered, a little shyly. I had been studying him furtively, in the firelight, and thinking how handsome and interesting he looked, with a handkerchief bound across his manly brow!

"I think I ought to be starting at once, in that case, for grand-papa is all alone and will want me."

"I wish you could stay," said Miss Barrie wistfully. (We had grown suddenly friendly on that sad evening.) "But of course the rector must not be neglected. Shall I order the carriage?"

"Or will you walk?" interposed her brother. "It is a lovely night, and if you will allow me I will escort you home."

I murmured something about not liking to trouble him, but he did not heed me, and indeed it was far pleasanter to look forward to a walk home in his company than to a solitary drive in a close carriage.

Miss Barrie kissed me and pressed my hand closely as we parted. I tried to say a few hopeful words, but somehow her forebodings had infected me, and my eyes were full of sympathetic tears as we came out into the starlit darkness.

Mr. Barrie did not talk much, and I respected his silence. Now and then he unconsciously quickened his pace, and I had

almost to run to keep up with him ; and then he would suddenly remember me and pause, with a laugh and an apology.

" I am afraid you think me a mad sort of escort, Miss Vernon," he said once ; " but you must please excuse me. One does not get a crack on the head every day, you know. And then I keep going on over and over again the details of the afternoon to see if in any way it was my fault. Do *you* think it was ? " he added earnestly. " You were the only eye-witness. Was I driving too fast or too carelessly ? "

I assured him that to the best of my knowledge he was not in the least to blame.

" No one could have prevented the horse's slipping on that loose stone," I said. " I am sure you ought not to distress yourself."

" If only it had not occurred just now," he said. " And I was taking such care for Theo, trying to keep her in my sight every minute of the day, lest something should happen. Perhaps you do not know the foolish story of the curse, though ? " he added, trying to speak lightly, but betraying in his tone more than he thought.

" Yes ; your sister told me. I cannot think such things could be true," I answered hesitatingly, " and yet she seems to believe it all."

" And so does Theo," he replied ; " believes it so implicitly, poor child, that she will die to fulfil the prophecy. I mean that it has worked so much upon her nerves that she has no longer any hope of living ; and you know, when people lose hope, it is generally all up with them. It will be strange, strange, if she dies too."

He was silent once more, and I walked gravely by his side, feeling as if I had suddenly stepped into a new and unreal world, where all my ideas of life and destiny were being turned " topsy-turvy." I wondered what grandpapa, quietly writing his sermon in the study, would have to say to this strange Fate, which seemed to be the deity of the Barrie generations.

The young man would not come in when we reached the Rectory gate. He bade me a hearty good-bye, thanking me for all I had done, in a way I certainly scarcely deserved, and promising to send over early next morning with news of the patient and of my grandmother. And then he went away, and I watched him disappear under the trees, and thought, in a romantic school-



girl fashion, what a very pleasant thing it would be to have a lover as handsome and as interesting as Mr. Barrie of Barries' Court.

Grandmamma walked in herself at about eleven o'clock next day. I was in the garden gathering flowers, and ran to meet her, dropping my heavy-headed daffodils as I went.

"Oh, Granny, how is Miss Barrie? You are looking quite tired out. Have you had a bad night?"

Grandmamma did not pull me up for asking two questions in one breath, as she might have done at another time. She took my arm and leant on it a little heavily as we went up the path.

"Yes, it was rather a trying night," she said. "The poor child suffered terribly, and when she had been given an opiate I hardly think the pain was less. She moaned and started and cried out all the time."

"Did she talk of the curse?" I asked eagerly,

"Yes," answered Granny. "Poor, superstitious girl, that seemed to be the one idea in her head. Oh, if she had been my daughter, I would have strained every nerve to keep her in ignorance of the tradition. The doctors say that the thought of her supposed doom has wrought upon her so that if she should recover it may be with the loss of her reason. It is too sad, too dreadful."

Granny was trembling as she spoke, and even to me the sunshine and the blue sky, and the scent of the primroses, seemed but a mockery—a dreary parade of brightness, in the face of a catastrophe like that.

Seeing us approaching, grandpapa came out into the hall to meet us, and we established Granny in a comfortable arm-chair to rest, while I went off with her keys to do the necessary household duties in her stead. She had promised, she told us, to return to Barries' Court for the night. There seemed to be no female relatives in the family (another proof, I thought, of the working of the curse), and poor Hope had begged her to come back. Theodora appeared easier when Granny was near, and the frightened women-servants were only too glad to have a responsible person in the house. Of course a trained nurse had been sent for, so that my grandmother would not be overtaxed, and she gladly acceded to Hope's request.

The doctors assured her that the danger could not last long. In one way or the other a change must take place very

shortly. They could not tell yet how things were likely to go, but seemed very grave.

"Wednesday will be her twenty-first birthday," I said, half under my breath, and grandpapa looked at me quite sternly, for him, and told me not to be foolish. But nevertheless I found myself getting more and more excited as the fateful day drew nearer. I went up once to take a letter to Granny, who, after the first, almost lived at the great house, and I saw both Miss Hope and her brother. They made me come in and have a chat, but they were evidently frightfully anxious and absent-minded, I could see, and I would not stay long, as I perceived what an effort it was for them to make small talk.

Mr. Barrie insisted on escorting me home, for which I was half sorry, as I could not imagine what to talk about; but he seemed satisfied with very little, and when we came to the Rectory gate he grasped my hand and said, "I thank you," quite fervently.

"Thank you for what?" said I, smiling up at him. He seemed slightly embarrassed.

"For letting me be silent, I think," he answered, after a second. "This walk has done me no end of good."

And then he turned shy and strode away so quickly that I feared my smile had vexed him. All Tuesday I heard nothing from Barries' Court, and I was afraid to venture there to inquire. Grandpapa called at the lodge, where daily bulletins were posted to prevent unnecessary noise at the house itself, but the report only said, "Miss Barrie just the same."

He and I had a game of chess together after supper, and I was altogether routed, for my thoughts were away with Granny, in that great melancholy mansion, over which, it seemed to me, the darkness of death was hovering like a heavy cloud.

The night was a very still one, and when I went upstairs to bed, I opened my window wide and looked away across the softly swelling hills, to where the woods of Barries' Court showed, a black mass, against the pale sky.

There was scarcely a breath of wind to stir the tulips down in the garden, or the young frail leaves of the clematis which twined about the porch. I could not make up my mind to sleep yet, and I knelt on the low window seat, with my hands clasped, in a sort of voiceless prayer. Might not this life be spared and the fateful spell of the long past years removed? If it had been



possible, I would almost have wished to change places with Miss Barrie, to suffer instead of her, and so prove the futility of the old legend. I had grown strangely interested in the whole family since last week, and I dreaded what effect upon Miss Hope any tragic ending to the story might have. I do not know how long I knelt there, but suddenly there was the sharp ring of hoofs and the thunder of a galloping horse.

Something flashed past the gate. In the dimness of the suffused moonlight I could perceive a man in livery, for I caught sight of bright buttons as he went. He was riding as if for dear life in the direction of the nearest town. I sank down trembling upon the window seat, feeling that the crisis was come. The two local doctors both lived at B——, and I felt sure that none of the Barries' Court horses would be ridden at such a pace unless some one were in dire necessity.

A little later, while I still waited with straining ears and eyes, the brougham with its pair of chestnuts dashed by, sent, as I concluded, to bring the doctors faster than their own steeds might be able to manage. Never before had I sat up all the night, but I knew that I should not sleep if I went to bed ; so, wrapping myself in a thick shawl, I knelt and waited by the open window.

It was very weird, and solemn, and awful, with no sound but occasional ghostly whispers among the leaves or the scurry of some small animal across the gravel path. No star looked out to cheer me, the sky was completely overclouded ; but the moonlight filtered through, and all the surrounding objects showed dim and vague and enormous in the universal greyness. What a long watch it seemed ! I thought it would never end. The church clock had struck two before the distant roll of wheels greeted my ears again.

Nearer and nearer they came, with lights flashing between the hedgerows. Oh ! how I longed to rush down and beg to be taken up. I believe I was tempted to "hang on behind" in street urchin fashion, if only I might be transported somehow to the great house, to know what was happening.

But I restrained myself, for another idea had seized me. After the carriage had passed our little white gate, I heard, far off, the sound again of horses' hoofs. I guessed that the groom must be returning, more leisurely, and I determined to waylay him.

Grandpapa was a little deaf and the servants slept at the back of the house. No one was likely to hear me unbolt the front door, and I felt that I must, I must have news. I took my hand-lamp and crept down through the warm, silent house. The bolt was easily slipped ; no one feared burglars at the Rectory, and sheltering my light with my hand, I stole softly across the grass, which was much too damp for my thin slippers. But I did not think of that, so fearful was I that the rider might pass before I got to the gate. He could not overlook me if I managed to keep the light burning, and fortunately there was next to no air stirring.

The horse started as it drew near, but was too weary to make much demonstration, and the young groom looked weary too. I knew him well, for he was in grandpapa's Sunday class.

"Oh, Ned, is anything wrong? Have you been for the doctor?"

Ned did not seem in the least surprised to see me at that uncanny hour, with a shawl over my head and my evening dress on.

"'Tis Miss Barrie. I've been for the doctors, and they are to telegraph for the big London one as soon as the office is open. But the housekeeper she says as it's no use, she's goin' fast."

The poor young fellow had a soft heart, and the doom which had been hanging over his mistress's head was frequently discussed by the household. He looked as if he were going to cry, and I felt in like predicament. I tried to elicit further details, but he knew no more. He had only done what he was ordered to do, and Brown Bess had gone like the wind ; no one could have got to B—— faster than they two had. But he must take her home and look after her now, or she would suffer. So he rode slowly on again, and I went back to my room chilled and disconsolate.

But all the speed of Brown Bess and all the skill in the world had been of no avail.

Grandmamma came home early in the morning, looking utterly worn out and melancholy. My eager questions died upon my lips when I saw her face.

"It is all over, Madeline ; she passed away just at midnight, before the doctors came. It was very sudden at the last."

"At midnight!" I repeated, awe-struck, yet not amazed. Then the curse had been fulfilled yet again. Another Miss Barrie had not lived to see the dawn break on her twenty-first birthday!

## PART II.

## ' HOW IT WAS TAKEN AWAY.

TWO years came and went. If events had fallen out as I fully expected them to do, I should have returned to my midland home; the Barries would have deserted the old house, which had been the scene of such a sorrow to them, and our paths in life might never have crossed again. I quite felt that Miss Barrie's death had severed the slender link which bound us for a time together; and it was as much to my astonishment as to any one else's that I found all my ideas utterly overthrown.

I *did* go back to my own people, but only for a little while; the Barries *did* go abroad, but for a very brief sojourn. At the end of two years after that spring evening when we first met, we were at Barries' Court again; and I, plain little Madeline Vernon, the rector's granddaughter, was transformed into Mrs. Barrie, with servants, and carriages, and diamonds; all as very small accessories, in her opinion, to the best husband in the world!

I will not waste your time by describing how this wonder came about; that is not the story I wish to tell: suffice it to say that after our wedding in September, we spent a long honeymoon abroad, and did not come home until the spring blossoms were making the orchards beautiful with sheets of rose-tinged snow.

Hope had been staying with various friends during our absence, but I know she was very glad of our return. She had no home except at Barries' Court; and I was delighted to see how readily she agreed to living with us. I had been terribly anxious as to the way in which she might look at Christopher's marriage. I knew that if any one had stepped in between me and my only brother, I should have felt more or less aggrieved all the days of my life; and I was quite surprised at the calm, nay, even happy light in which Hope saw the event. I was sure she was fond of me; but I could scarcely understand how there seemed no spark of jealousy in her breast; no shadow of discontent at the fact of my reigning where she had so naturally reigned since her sister's death. But as I puzzled over it all, a light dawned over me, and in a flash I understood. She was convinced that she had not long to live; and it was not so hard to leave Christopher now that she felt he would have a wife to look after him. In her eyes, our marriage had taken place just

at the right time—our happiness was a source of satisfaction and peace to her ; and she looked forward almost calmly to the hour of her departure, knowing that her dearly beloved brother would have the consolation which was, in her opinion, for ever denied to herself.

The discovery pained, though it hardly surprised, me. We had been hoping that change of air and scene and the society of pleasant friends were aiding to disperse the cloud of sorrow which had rested upon Hope since her sister's death ; and we had, in planning the new arrangements of the house, included her in every project and consulted her in every detail. But she took little interest in our ideas, and acquiesced almost without comment in all our propositions. I began to get very anxious about her as the spring advanced.

We had arrived at Barries' Court towards the end of April ; and for the first few days Hope looked well, and was even cheerful. She seemed resolved that no personal sorrow should dim the brightness of our married life. But gradually, as it appeared, the shadow of approaching doom quenched the light in her eyes and hushed the laughter into which my husband now and then betrayed her. Her twenty-first birthday would fall on the 19th of June ; the days were slipping rapidly away, and, though I owned my foolishness, yet I had to confess to Christopher that a frantic terror seized me at the thought of it.

"We cannot live here quietly, Chris., waiting for it ! It would be too awful ! I believe it would drive me mad, and the suspense is enough to kill her of itself. We *must* go away somewhere. Oh, if I could get some of the waters of oblivion, that Hope might drink of them and forget that fatal date ! Could we not give her a sleeping draught ? alter all the almanacks and clocks in the house ; do anything to get the day over without her knowledge ? She is fretting herself into a nervous fever over it already !"

"And you are no better," said Christopher with a tremendous sigh. "I don't see what is to be done. We could never trick her about the date, she counts the days too carefully for that, and as to sleeping draughts, I dare not meddle with things of that sort." He looked out of the window hopelessly. "Of course I can take her away," he said after a pause.

"Not her only," I cried eagerly ; "I must go too. I could not

rest if I were left behind alone. Between us we *must* save her. I believe I would give up everything to keep her with us—except you, Christopher.”

He looked at me fondly.

“You are not up to travelling,” he said; “we came here for peace and quietness for you, after all your journeyings.”

“Oh, but peace and quietness are to be found in heaps of other places,” I answered. “I can assure you I shall be ill if I stay here by myself, and worse if Hope stays too. We must go away all together, and perhaps something may help us. Hope shall not die without every effort to prevent it. I don’t believe in the curse one bit, but she does, and it is that which is killing her.”

So after a short consultation, in which, for once, Hope was not included, we settled to go down to Cornwall and take lodgings for a month or two in a romantic nook on that wild and beautiful coast.

I am sure that Hope was surprised at our decision, for we had so lately returned from our wanderings and announced our intention of settling down at Barries’ Court; but she acquiesced with a show of alacrity, which, however, did not deceive me in the least. I knew pretty well by this time that all places were alike to Hope now.

The one overmastering thought of her heart permitted her to take no interest in anything beyond itself. We were a dreadful set of hypocrites in those days, for I was pretending a delight which I was far from feeling at the prospect of another move; and Christopher spoke in glowing terms of the splendid walks to which he looked forward, when we both knew that the improvements being carried out on the estate were in such a critical position that it was an absolute sacrifice for him to go and leave them without the master’s eye.

However, the middle of May found us, with the journey safely accomplished, a party of four persons, ourselves and a treasure of a maid, established in a tiny house hidden away in a cleft of rock, within a stone’s-throw of the sea. The narrow valley was so placed as to be easily overlooked by explorers of the breezy heights above; but at that time of the year the trippers had not begun to “trip,” and our solitude was often unbroken, save for the arrival of the postwoman, a neat and active little person,



who came at noon with the letters, and waited half-an-hour to enable us to write any replies that might be requisite. It was an unusually forward season ; the summer had suddenly set in, before the spring had fairly played its part, and our little cove was a sort of trap for catching sunbeams. No one who has not visited the Lizard and the adjacent coast can form any idea of the beauties of its sea, and rocks, and sand, and sky. It was in vain that I sketched diligently, while Janet held a sunshade above my head ; and Christopher and Hope danced away over the water with a life-boat man to guide them to the caves and the inaccessible haunts of cormorants and gulls. I was such a bad sailor myself that the very sight of their start, from a slippery and perilous rock which was the only sort of pier, brought my heart into my mouth, as Janet expressed it ; but the Barries had voyaged so much that nothing seemed to daunt them, and we both hoped that, with the colour which the breezes brought into Hope's cheek, might come a returning confidence in life and its possibilities.

I wonder if she ever forgot the haunting fear ! I know I did not, although I stoutly denied the power of the curse. My mind was occupied with it all the time I was struggling with my sketches. They were miserable failures, all of them. I could never reproduce the gorgeous colouring, the tossing, tumbling foam, the pearly mists of morning, or the cool shadows cast by the great serpentine monsters which lay in magnificence on every side. But some one has them still, treasured up, as mementos of a time that can never come again. And that some one is not Christopher.

One by one the days slipped by ; sunshine and breeze, and the rush of the waves ; moonlight and solemn stars, and the deeper sound of the waters, that seems to rise with darkness, until its awfulness makes one afraid. And all day long, and nearly all the night, the voices of the gulls ; joyous in the morning, weird and mysterious out of the twilight, like voices in a dream.

June came ; a week, a fortnight passed, and nothing had happened, as I fondly hoped, to turn the current of my sister-in-law's thoughts. Christopher noticed, he told me, that she had begun to dread the boat ; and more than once, when it appeared in sight, she had vanished, and he was forced to go out alone.

"She thinks she is going to be drowned," I said, promptly

jumping to a conclusion in a purely feminine way. "She sees danger in everything, and no wonder. Don't persuade her to go with you, Chris. It must be dreadful for her. Let her stay quietly here with Janet and me ; it will be far better."

So Christopher professed to be tired of boating, and I was glad for his sake when a friend from town wrote to say that he was in the neighbourhood, and would pay us a visit, if we could put him up. We had taken the whole cottage, except the kitchens, and the owners left us in possession every night, retiring to their farm up on the heights and returning early to do the necessary housework. So there was one cupboard of a bedroom to spare, and none of us were sorry when Dick Madox arrived with his knapsack to occupy it.

I knew him very well by name. He had been a college friend of Christopher's, and was reputed to be a rising artist. Even Hope was roused into enthusiasm over his sketches ; while I locked up my portfolio in abject terror, lest he should happen to set eyes upon my efforts. He was a handsome fellow and full of laughter and fun. On the very first evening I made sure that in him lay the solution of our difficulty. He was to fall in love with Hope, and Hope with him ; and what girl could be all day long thinking of her own possible demise, with a lover like Dick at her elbow ? But he must make haste about it. There was no time for dallying. Even Christopher grew anxious and impatient when his masculine mind had taken in all the bearings of my plan.

I could have laughed at his transparent manœuvres to leave the two together ; and I could have cried, too, at Hope's tiresome dulness in preferring my company to that of Dick. Four days, three days, two days, to be tided over, and every morning Hope looked paler and more fragile. She answered absently to what we said ; there was a dreamy far-off expression in her eyes, and I noticed, with a thrill of pain, that the terror and despair I had sometimes seen there were gone. In place of them was a calm, almost happy, resignation that angered me.

"I believe, if a calamity overtook her now, she would make no effort to save herself," I said to my husband. "Has she no spirit, Chris ? Has the shadow of this horrible curse taken all the life-blood out of her already ?"

Chris. sighed and did not answer. Indeed, what was there



for him to say? We had decided to say nothing to Dick Madox about the subject which was preoccupying us. I dare-say he may have wondered a little at the way we treated Hope; the studied cheerfulness which veiled our watchfulness of all her doings. She could hardly fail to perceive how we watched her; but at least, he should treat her as an ordinary mortal, and not as one whose death-warrant is already signed. Christopher was very nearly as nervous as I was by this time. He feared that Hope's mind might give way under the strain, or that the smallest accident might startle her spirit out of its dwelling-place. For, to our over-anxious eyes, she looked like a bird on the very edge of its cage, fairly quivering in anticipation of its flight. Perhaps, if our party had contained one middle-aged and unromantic head in its circle, we might have been more sensible; as it was, Dick Madox was the only safe element in its composition at present, and he supplied a balance of good-humour and general gaiety which was sincere and therefore priceless.

On the morning of the 18th Christopher was up betimes.

"It is the last day, Madeline," he said to me, and his usually ruddy face was quite pale and worn. "I have been awake for hours thinking of Hope. I expect she has not slept a wink, and she is certain to be out early. I must be with her wherever she goes to-day. Pray for us, darling, with all your might. Oh, if we can only tide over the next eighteen hours!"

He would not take his usual swim that morning lest he should miss his sister when she came out; but I saw him from the window climb on to a ledge of rock and stand there looking seaward; and I wondered what would happen before the morning sun should shine into his eyes again.

Presently Hope joined him; a pretty, graceful figure in her print frock, outlined clearly against the sapphire background of the sea. Looking at the two with a full heart I quite forgot the existence of Dick Madox, till I heard him scramble from his low window on to the turf, with a shout: "Stand where you are; don't move!" and I caught sight of his sketch-book and a rapidly-working pencil. Christopher glanced back with a smile at him, but Hope stood still, the light gleaming on her hair and the breeze just stirring the folds of her gown.

Dick was not long over his sketch, and when he had done he ran down to join them, and they went away across the smooth

sands together. Breakfast was waiting when they returned, for Dick had insisted upon getting to the top of an exceedingly precipitous rock, just to see what was on the other side ; and they said it had been necessary to follow in order to pick up the possible fragments. He was full of plans for an excursion, which the state of the tides favoured, to some seldom explored caves under the cliffs several miles away, and Christopher favoured the idea. Both men, however, wanted Hope's company, and this she refused.

"I shall stay with Madeline," she said, and I could see that her lips trembled. "Indeed, I would rather not go."

"Let her do as she likes," said I, trying to speak lightly. "Suppose we make a compromise. You two shall go and explore, and Hope and I will come and meet you when it gets cooler. Really, I think it will be too hot for walking in the middle of the day."

But Christopher objected. He had made up his mind that Hope should be in his safe keeping for that particular time ; and I was truly thankful, for I dreaded to be left alone with her to face the unknown evil. And after some more discussion Hope gave in with a pitiful little smile. After all, it did not much signify. If this thing was to be, it was to be. But I felt, when she came to give me a parting kiss, what a world of emotion lay beneath her self-restraint. I would not let her see how agitated I was too, but chattered on about the luncheon-basket and the place where I was to meet them in the evening, as if nothing were the matter.

Then I went out and watched them disappear in the distance, with a sinking heart ; and I am sure Janet must have thought me demented, I was so restless and disquieted all that long summer's day. Every moment I dreaded terrible tidings ; even the very cries of the gulls sounded like signals of distress, and the footsteps of the postwoman coming in quite an opposite direction from that which the walkers had taken, seemed verily like the knell of doom to my excited imagination.

I could eat no lunch. I could neither read nor work, and I hastened on the tea-hour as if that would bring me nearer to the sun-setting. When at last the shadows began to grow appreciably longer, I told Janet that I was going to meet the party, and that we should all be at home before dusk. I said this with an

assurance which I was far from feeling, and even gave minute directions about supper, though I believe I hardly expected such a meal would ever be required.

Janet accompanied me up the steepest part of the cliff, as she was going to the farm for some cream, but our paths after that diverged, and we soon lost sight of each other. It was one of those perfect evenings when the beauties of sea and sky almost weigh the soul down with a sort of regret that one cannot appreciate and enjoy them more. Exquisite scenery often makes me sad, and there is always, to my mind, a pathos about the sunset hour which no other time of day possesses.

The solitude about me was complete. No sign of human habitation was in sight, and even the ships were so far out that I could scarcely distinguish them on the horizon.

Surely by this time I ought to hear the sound of voices, to see at least some sign of distant figures. I climbed a little heathery knoll and looked around me, but except for the sea birds, I was quite alone; and the apprehensions which had been weighing me down all day rushed upon me with tenfold force. I felt convinced that "it," the dreaded catastrophe, had happened, and that was the reason of their lateness. Christopher had promised me to be at home by six, and he was a man of his word. It was six now, and they must still be miles away. Oh! why had I not made an effort to accompany them so that at least this agony of suspense might have been spared me?

The utter helplessness and nothingness of humanity appalled me as I stood there in the sunshine under the wide sky, with the solemn leagues of water stretching away on either hand.

Of what use were my prayers, my protestations, I, a mere atom, a speck of dust?

My faith seemed verily to waver, and the unspoken words were in my heart:

"If God lets Hope die I can never love him any more!"

I never said the words, but I know that they were there.

The weather, as I have said, was unusually warm, and the short, close turf on the cliff was burnt brown and had become treacherously dry and slippery; in fact, in places it was almost like smooth ice. Christopher had often warned us not to go too close to the edge during our daily scrambles, and we had been very cautious, for the rocks below were bristling and jagged, and the

breakers were generally formidable, even in the calmest weather. This evening, however, no thought of danger from that quarter entered my head.

But fancying that I heard voices down below me, and not knowing whether there might possibly be a way of returning by the beach which I had not before discovered, I hastily stepped to the brink to look over.

My ears, however, had deceived me ; there was no one there, and, moreover, the masses of rock and the huge boulders, amongst which the huge waves were surging, lay piled at the foot of the cliff in such a manner as to quite prevent the most active of walkers from attempting to find a route that way.

But I had forgotten my husband's warnings ; and even as I came to the precipitous edge, my feet slipped from under me, the very ground itself seemed to give way, and I fell, vainly grasping at a tuft of sea-pinks to stay myself. Even in that instant, before I lost consciousness, a feeling of surprise and gladness came over me. Perhaps the curse was to be transferred to me ! Perhaps it was I, and not Hope, who was to be sacrificed ! and if so, I knew that the powers of the spell would be broken, as I was not a born Barrie. All this passed through my mind with the rapidity of a lightning flash ; then came a violent concussion and utter and blank darkness !

\* \* \* \* \*

Out of a bewildering confusion of sounds one voice reached me at last, coming, it seemed, from somewhere miles away.

It was Hope's voice, imploring me to open my eyes, to speak, to move my hand at least, to show her I was alive. There was a weight as of lead upon my lids, but I struggled to lift them, and looked up into the terrified face, showing dark against the background of golden sky.

" Oh, Hope, what is it ? "

My words were muffled and indistinct ; I did not understand what had happened, nor where I was.

" Thank God," was Hope's fervent answer. " Don't try to move yet ; lie still, my darling ; you must not attempt to get up. You have had a terrible fall, and all these loose stones slipped with you. I will lift them away first and then we can see if you are much hurt."

I was too dazed and frightened to fully understand what she

said, but I lay still obediently ; in truth, I could not move for the stones which half-covered me, and just at the present moment I felt scarcely any pain ; that was to come later.

Hope worked rapidly and almost in silence ; her cheeks were deadly pale, she had torn her dress and lost her hat, but I was not able to question how she came there.

In supreme moments such as these even the most remarkable incidents appear perfectly common-place and natural ; it is only afterwards that we have time to wonder how they occurred.

"Your head is all right," she said, at last, coming to kneel beside me and passing her hands lightly over it, "and your neck is not broken ; that is something to be thankful for !" The suspicion of tears in her voice brought the reality of them into my eyes, but she begged me to be calm.

"It will help me so much more if you will not cry, darling," she said earnestly. "I haven't very much strength myself, and if you give way, what *shall* I do ?"

The piteous entreaty in her face restrained my hysterical inclination, and she proceeded with her examination.

"Right arm ? yes, you can lift it and move it. Now the left—ah ! don't try to raise it ; I am afraid it is broken."

"I am sure it is," I said faintly. "I did not feel it at first, but when you pushed that heavy stone off the pain was excruciating."

Hope looked about her desperately.

Fortunately, my parasol had been in my hand when I fell, and she seized upon it at once. I don't know where she learnt her surgery, but in a few minutes she had denuded the stick of its surroundings, snapped it in two, and with its "bones" and a soft sash from her own waist, put the injured arm into rough but serviceable splints.

Then she inquired if I could raise myself, which I did without much difficulty. It was marvellous to find how comparatively few were my hurts ; the fact of the crumbling edge of the cliff having given way when I fell accounted for my not being more injured. I had slid rather than tumbled down the face of the precipitous incline, and the stout serge skirt I wore had protected me to some extent from the shower of stones. But I knew, and so did Hope, that there was another life in danger beside my own, and though I made as light of my fall as I could, it was impossible to ignore the gravity of the situation. Here we were, two helpless



women, at the foot of an unclimbable precipice, with the incoming tide thundering among the boulders at our feet and sending up its spray into our faces ; with night advancing, and no means of letting any one know where we were. Even if we had the chance of hailing a passing boat, which was very unlikely, it would be perfectly impossible to be rescued from the sea side, as there was no landing place among those jagged rocks, whose black points stood up, like cruelly bristling fangs, far out from the shore.

"How did you get here, Hope?" I said at last, meeting the terror in her eyes with a poor attempt at cheerfulness. "If you could come down to me, surely Christopher can too! I should not mind anything if only he were here."

The physical dread of death was pressing sorely upon me now. Just at first I had thought it would be sweet to die if, by so dying, Hope might be suffered to live; but now that she was beside me, safe and well, with the fatal day nearly ended, I wanted life too, and life meant Christopher! If I could touch his hand again I should feel safe. But Hope shook her head.

"It was like this," she said. "We were all coming home, and should have been back by 6 o'clock, as Christopher promised, only Mr. Madox would stop sketching. He is so tiresome about his 'little bits.' And Christopher wouldn't let me come on and meet you, and yet he couldn't leave Mr. Madox, because the sun was in his eyes, and he wanted the umbrella held over his head, stupid man! I climbed up to the top of a little mound, and I saw you, as I thought, ever so far away, going towards the farm. It came into my head that you had mistaken the way we had gone, and I thought, by taking a cross cut, I could stop you before you had gone too far. So I said to Christopher that I saw you, and would go and meet you. It was some one in a light hat and blouse, whom I mistook for you."

"Janet, going for cream," I explained, thinking with a sort of tragic amusement of the supper I had ordered. "I gave her a hat of mine only yesterday; she had nothing shady to wear, and her freckles were getting quite a burden to her."

"Christopher said, 'All right, go and meet her,'" continued Hope, "and I hurried off, but I just began to think that it wasn't you, after all, when I saw your parasol fluttering in quite an opposite direction. It was on the very edge of the cliff!" She

shuddered at the recollection. "I heard you call out, and then a great noise of stones falling, and I simply flew! I believe I came down almost on top of you, but I don't know how I did it! I only know that I found myself down here, and that I was quite ten minutes trying to make you open your eyes! I wish now I had waited to tell Christopher, for he is certain to go on to the farm, and it may be ever so long before he discovers us." So it proved. The wind freshened as the night came on, and any shouts the seekers might raise were quite inaudible to us. The gold and crimson faded away and the stars came out, and still we two crouched together on an insecure slope, scarcely venturing to move, so near and so threatening did those hungry waves appear, and so terribly insecure seemed the masses of crumbling rock which were poised above and around us.

Hope had a couple of dry sandwiches in her pocket, and with these she insisted on feeding me, by morsels at a time, though I was altogether disinclined for food.

We tried in turn to keep up each other's spirits; but as the time went on and an increasing chilliness made itself felt in the damp air, we grew more and more unhappy and silent; and the acute pain of my fractured arm and numerous bruises seemed to become less bearable every moment. At last, as the result of an impatient movement, the intensity of my sufferings made me faint away once more, and this, as Hope told me later, was the climax.

She determined, come what might, to make an attempt at scaling the cliffs. She felt certain that I should die if I were left much longer where I was; and now that a merciful unconsciousness had overtaken me, it seemed less cruel to leave me alone. So she began a perilous descent to the beach first, hoping from there to see some possible pathway to the top. There was practically no shore here; the waves washed right up to the face of the precipice, and had eaten out long caverns underneath, where they roared and boomed with a hollow never-ceasing thunder. And Hope's heart utterly failed her when at length she stood on one of the slippery boulders looking up at the frowning heights above.

No one, not even the most surefooted of goats, could clamber up those overhanging rocks. The coming down almost seemed miraculous as viewed from beneath. But she gained one new



idea from her scramble. Here and there, wedged among the stones, or dashed high and dry into little crannies where only winter storms could reach, were pieces of drift wood, and Hope had matches in her pocket, for they had taken a little Etna with them on their excursion, all being believers in tea as a refreshment during a long day's tramp. The Etna was far away enough, in Christopher's keeping, but at least we could have a fire, and besides the warmth it would be a splendid beacon in case any boat were out in search of us.

It was far more difficult to get back to where I was than it had been to leave me ; more especially as Hope was laden with materials for her bonfire.

She must have risked her life half-a-dozen times, while I lay there like a log, adding to her terrors by the length of my insensibility. But when I came back to life again, there was a comforting little blaze in a sheltered cleft beside me, and Hope was rubbing my numbed feet with anxious energy. She was so busy that she had no time to look about her ; but as I lay there, slowly realizing once more our strange situation, it seemed to me that I saw, clear against the misty background of water, another light, quite distinct from the fitful rays of our impromptu signal.

" Hope, is it a boat ? " I gasped the words out incoherently, for I was well nigh exhausted.

Hope thought that I was wandering, but a cry of joy escaped her as she turned her head. I told her afterwards that I had never imagined a woman could shout as she shouted that night ! She piled on all the wood she had collected and stirred the blaze madly. She waved burning sticks in the air, and she raised shrieks that were perfectly ear-piercing to me, but which seemed carried away and lost altogether in the mingled sounds of wind and sea. Nevertheless, we were certain that a shout came to us in reply, and that the light bobbed up and down in answer to our signals.

I said I could hear Christopher's voice (he told me afterwards it was a boatman's), and we both cried in a most childish fashion, which perhaps was not to be wondered at.

And then the friendly light disappeared, and there was a long period of suspense and painful watching for what would come next.

Our rescue was an extremely difficult one, but once our exact whereabouts was discovered, the coastguardsmen knew what to

do. A rope ladder was let down at some distance further on, and at length some help reached us. Need I say that Christopher came first, and after him, Mr. Madox, hardly less eager to be of use.

They had a chair with them, and somehow we were drawn up into a place of safety. But I realized none of it.

It seemed to me that death came with the rescuers, but I did not fear him, for his face was like Christopher's.

\* \* \* \* \*

After all, we were back in our lodgings before the day-dawn, though our few hours' misery will always seem like ages to look back upon. It was only natural that Christopher had followed us, as he thought, to the farm.

There a small girl, the only person at home, told him that a lady had been there and gone again. The lady was in reality Janet, but Christopher concluded otherwise, and felt sure that I must have met Hope just outside and returned home with her.

When he reached our lodgings, he at once discovered his mistake, and grew suddenly alarmed. Mr. Madox was disposed to make light of his fears, but when Christopher told him briefly the facts of the case, nothing could exceed his energy in the search. The surface of the downs is broken up into innumerable little hollows, and it took a long time to be certain that we were not seated in one of these nooks, enjoying a quiet read, or chat, as it was frequently our custom to be. To make matters more perplexing, a party of strangers were visiting the Lizard that day, and the two men careered wildly after a half-a-dozen light parasols and cotton frocks, till they fairly frightened the visitors off under the impression that the region was haunted by a pair of wandering lunatics.

At last Christopher and Mr. Madox set off for Lizard Town to ask advice, and just as the dusk grew into darkness, a boat was manned as a sort of forlorn hope. Christopher did not much believe in it: circumstances seemed to point to our being inland, rather than on the coast, but he grasped eagerly at any new idea. Without Hope's beacon it is doubtful even then if they would have discovered us, and we should have spent the night where we were. As it was, we had been there quite long enough. Mr. Madox rushed off for a doctor as soon as ever we were delivered from our perilous position; but, as I say, I knew nothing of all that.

Only once, when I was safe at our lodgings, under Janet's tender ministrations, did consciousness return to me.

"Is it to-morrow?" I said incoherently. "Is the 18th of June over yet?"

Hope understood me, though Janet did not. She bent over to kiss me with a strange light in her wet eyes.

"The dawn is breaking, Madeline, darling; the 18th is come—and gone." . . . .

Two days later, a new and minute Miss Barrie opened her eyes upon this world of strange vicissitudes. As Hope came to my bedside, with trembling cheerfulness, I put the tiny fingers into hers.

"The old woman's words have come true at last," I whispered. "The curse came with a child's hand, and with a child's hand it is taken away. You risked your own life for her and me, and the hateful spell is broken for ever."

Mr. Madox never tired of descanting on Hope's pluck and presence of mind during our adventure. He would make her take him to the spot and describe minutely what had happened; and the two began to be so happy together that they did not want other society, for which Christopher and I were grateful to them. Hope told me since that all the long hours of her watch she never thought of the "doom" which she had been dreading for years. The vision of Christopher's anguish, if anything happened to me, blotted out all other imaginations, and the unpoetical nature of our rescue, just at the witching hour of midnight, quite put any more tragic notions out of her head. So after all, I learned to think of my tumble over the Cornish cliffs as a most fortuitous occurrence, and Mr. and Mrs. Madox regard it in the same light.

The present Miss Barrie, of Barries' Court, may hear the legend with my consent now. I have ceased to dread any evil consequences from the sin of the haughty Lady Elinor. The lives Hope saved, at the risk of her own, may have atoned, who knows? for those others, sacrificed in the far away past. All the same, I would not call my baby Elinor, though of course I am not superstitious. She is named Stella, and was veritably our star, heralding the dawning of brighter days for Barries' Court.

FLORENCE L. HENDERSON.

## In the Watches of the Night.

I AM writing this account in order that it may be found when I am dead. That will not be very long now. My fate is swiftly overtaking me ; day by day the dark waters draw me ; soon the summons will come for the last time : I cannot resist, I cannot escape, if I would.

More than a year ago, I came as a probationer to the London hospital of St. Peter. I was placed at once in a surgical ward, and for the first six weeks my life was as miserable as only that of a newly joined recruit to the nursing world can be. Then I began to find my feet, to settle down to the swing of hospital work, and to discover the functions of my own little wheel in the machinery around me. Every one was very kind, my health stood the strain well, and I began to be thoroughly happy in my busy, stirring existence.

At the end of two months, the matron sent for me one morning and informed me that I was to be moved to a medical ward in a distant part of the building, the oldest block, where the great echoing stone passages were badly lit and heated and where it seemed like a long walk from one ward to another.

I was not displeased at the prospect of a change, and I began my work in "Alice" the next day. A week or two went by smoothly, and October drew to a close.

One dreary November evening a very bad case came up to the ward. The house physician was fetched in hot haste, and he shook his head as he bent over the bed.

"I should have been called before the patient was moved from the waiting-room," he said. "Where is the nurse in attendance? I must ask her a few questions."

"Run down to the waiting-room, Nurse Graham," said the ward-sister, turning to me. "Tell Nurse Tracy she is wanted up here at once."

I rushed off and flew downstairs ; there was a yellow fog outside, and it filled the corridors, which were more than usually dark and gloomy.

At that hour there was no one about ; I did not meet a soul on my way.

I burst into the waiting-room. The staff-nurse was there, with her assistant probationer. At my entry they both started up in a half-scared way.

"You are to go upstairs at once, Nurse Tracy," I said. "The house physician wants to speak to you in 'Alice' ward."

Nurse Tracy looked along the passage nervously.

"Did you come down alone?" she asked.

"Alone? Of course. Make haste ; there is no time to lose."

"This part of the hospital is so dark at night," she murmured, still delaying.

I looked at her in astonishment.

"I daresay your 'pro' will go with you if you are frightened," I said rather contemptuously. My own nerves were things which never troubled me. "I will stay and look after the room while you are gone. Only make haste."

"You are not afraid to be left?"

"What on earth should I be afraid of?"

"Oh—nothing,—only—it is lonely down here."

"Do be quick. Dr. Lawford is waiting for you."

The two went off together. I looked round for something to occupy me ; there were some glasses to wash, and I busied myself with them. A quarter of an hour passed, and neither of the nurses returned. I began to be a little impatient. The silence was oppressive. Nurse Tracy was right : it *was* lonely. The hospital was closed for the night ; I was completely shut away in that remote corner of the great building. Outside the fog hung heavily over the river, hiding the lights of the embankment on the opposite side.

Suddenly there was a short, sharp rap at the door.

I had not heard any footsteps approaching, I was startled, and involuntarily my heart gave a great throb.

"Come in," I said.

The person outside took no notice. Under any other circumstances I should have gone to see who was there, but I was becoming unaccountably nervous. I waited, more inclined to turn the key in the lock than to open the door.

The knock was repeated, a single rap, nothing more.

"Who is there?" I cried.

No answer.

"I am absurd," I said to myself, and taking my courage in both hands, I opened the door wide.

To my relief, it was only a woman who stood there. She was very tall, and her shabby black garments hung loosely on her gaunt limbs. Her face was half turned away from me, it was long and thin, and a peculiar droop of one eyelid imparted to it an unpleasant, almost sinister, expression. She wore something white round her neck, like a surgical bandage.

"What do you want?" I asked, wondering a little how she came there.

I had not heard the bell with which the hall-porter was accustomed to summon the nurses when an accident was brought in.

The woman did not speak; she stood, her head averted, as if she had not heard me.

"Who are you? What do you want?" I asked again.

Still no reply.

An uncomfortable thrill ran through me. Could she be a lunatic who had escaped from one of the wards? I had heard that such things had happened. I shrank a little from her.

"Will you tell me what you want?" I demanded for the last time, making an effort to speak sternly.

Then, at last, she turned her head and looked at me, and my heart stood still and my blood seemed to freeze under the horror of that awful gaze.

I never believed in hell before; but in that moment of overwhelming, sickening terror I knew I was face to face with a visitant from the invisible world: an evil spirit, a lost soul, stood there to drag me to destruction. There was no bell in the room. In the doorway, the silent horror in black blocked my exit.

I was paralyzed, fascinated with deadly fear; the devilish, triumphant glitter of those half-closed, stony eyes went through and through me; my heart had stopped beating: my brain was turned to ice; the Thing, the creature, seemed to be advancing upon me; I felt myself going mad. With a frantic shriek, I flung myself at the door; a bony hand closed upon my wrist; I was dragged violently into the passage. I could not struggle; I could not resist: I was in the clutch of a giant power. Oh the ghastly loathsomeness of that grip, icy-cold, irresistible, the grasp of

death on my warm, living flesh! Along the dim, yellow-lit corridors, on—on—I tried to shriek; no voice would come: only that fearful face was turned back on me. Now it was laughing—laughing with malignant, demoniacal glee —

The river! Through a window I caught a glimpse of the dark waters flowing tranquilly along.

Was that to be the end of our wild journey?

"The river! the river!" a voice seemed to be shouting in my ears.

My stupefied brain rose to a last effort. I was dimly conscious that we passed a door. Madly I dashed my disengaged hand upon the panels; it was my last chance. There was a rush of light from within, some one's arms about me, everything whirling, and I knew no more.

When I opened my eyes I was lying on a sofa in the house surgeon's sitting-room, the matron at my side, and a group of nurses standing by.

"She is coming to now. What was the matter, my dear?" asked the matron, bending over me.

"The woman—oh! the woman in black! Don't leave me alone!" was all I could say, clinging frantically to her.

"What woman? There was no one there," said the doctor. "I heard a noise, and went out, and there you were in the passage, fighting with the air apparently. You have been overworking. You will have to go home and rest."

They were all very good to me. The matron stayed with me herself that night, for I was half delirious, and quite unfit to be left alone.

The next day she made me tell her my story, but I could see she did not believe it.

"You must have fallen asleep, and had nightmare," she said. "You are a little hysterical. You must take a holiday; and when you come back you will see how foolish you have been."

I was sent home for a month. Away from the hospital, change of scene and rest did much to efface from my mind the terrible impression which had been made upon it.

I began to think that very likely the matron had been right: I was in a nervous, overwrought condition. Nurse Tracy had frightened me with her hints; the doctor had seen nothing: there could have been nothing. Still at night I would sometimes



awake with a start, in a cold perspiration, dreaming once again of that clutch on my wrist, those eyes looking into mine, and then I could only light my candle and sit waiting for the morning to disperse my terrors.

It was January when I returned to my work. I found that I had been put into a new ward, far away from "Alice" and its associations. The nurses were all strangers to me. No one mentioned the cause of my long absence. There is little room in the life of a probationer for imaginary fears, and gradually I ceased to think of my terrible adventure. If my mind reverted to it at all, I persuaded myself that it had been a hysterical phantom of my over-excited brain.

The months went by. I came to the end of my period as probationer, and took the certificate which made me a fully qualified nurse, signing at the same time the usual agreement to remain as such for two years.

November approached once more, with its fogs and dark, damp days. Sometimes for a week together the sun never penetrated the thick curtain of smoke and mist which overhung the great city.

Our matron had left us, and the lady who replaced her was inclined, after the fashion of new brooms, to sweep very clean. She made our lives a misery to us by her unexpected descents upon the wards at unusual hours, and by framing sundry petty, worrying rules and regulations, with which her predecessor had never troubled us. No one dared remonstrate, as she was very ready to resent the slightest appearance of encroachment on her authority.

One day a redistribution of work was made. We were at breakfast in the dining-hall when the list of the nurses who were to be transferred from one ward to another was read out. I was not listening very closely, when the sound of my own name struck my ears :

"Nurse Graham for night duty in 'Alice' ward!"

I turned suddenly cold. Vividly there rushed back upon me the remembrance of what I fondly imagined myself to have forgotten. I seized the first opportunity to go to the matron's room. She was sitting at her table, looking worried and annoyed.

"Well, what is it now, nurse?" she asked before I had opened my lips.

"I came to ask whether you could put any one else in my place in 'Alice' ward," I said.

"Certainly not. You are the fourth who has come here in an hour to complain of the ward to which she has been appointed. I will have no more of it. You must all learn to be content with my decisions. You are too fanciful; you have been spoilt lately."

She would not listen to another word. That evening I came over to "Alice" to commence my duties as night-nurse. The ward is large and comfortable. It has two entrances, one at the end of the long room, the other through a glass door in the middle of one side, nearly opposite the big stove. The place looked so cheerful when I saw it, under the flickering firelight, that I felt my fears disappear. What could possibly happen, with so many people close at hand? I made a determined effort to conquer my nervousness, and in a great degree succeeded.

The first night passed off smoothly. I was not alone. At St. Peter's there are two night-nurses to each ward, and also a "runner," that is to say, a probationer who divides the night between two wards.

A week went by. I had become quite used to the work, always rather trying at first, and was even beginning to enjoy it.

Then only last night the second nurse came on duty looking very ill. She kept up until the house surgeon had made his last round, though she was obviously suffering greatly; then she gave in and confessed that she must go up to bed.

"I don't like leaving you alone, but the 'pro.' will be here in half an hour, if you *could* manage till then," she said.

It was a heavy ward, but there was no help for it, and she went off, leaving me to myself.

The patients were all quiet, and I settled down by the fire to roll bandages. I had been at work perhaps twenty minutes, when a curious sensation came over me. I felt that some one was looking at me. Involuntarily I turned my head.

Some one stood in the passage, looking through the closed glass doors, a tall, gaunt figure in black, with half-shut, glittering eyes and ghastly white wrappings round the neck. My God! what horrible fate pursues me in the shape of that devilish thing!

I was like a bird fascinated by a snake. Those awful, stony eyes, repulsive, yet in some fearful way attractive—they drew

me—drew me—I could not speak. All power was gone from my frozen limbs. I saw nothing, knew nothing, but that black form, standing with hand outstretched to drag me down—down—to the hall whence it came.

I had risen from my chair ; step by step, as if asleep, I moved across the room ; loathing horror possessed my every member : yet I was drawn, my will crushed, my brain dead. Already my hand was upon the door-handle.

“What is the matter with you ? Where on earth are you going ?”

Some one had seized me by the arm, and was shaking me violently.

The probationer had come in from the other ward, and the spell was broken.

I did not faint this time. In answer to her questions, I told her I was ill, giddy, anything to silence her and keep her quiet. I wanted time to think, to consider. I knew now that I was safe no longer. Twice I have escaped from the clutches of that devil, but the third time—the third time I shall not escape. This morning I made a last appeal to the matron to be moved from “Alice.” I was met by a point-blank refusal. I asked to be allowed to go away. That was also refused.

I came out from her presence knowing my fate. All day long I have watched the black river flowing beneath my eyes ; all day long I have seemed to feel the cold waters closing over my head ; that grip is on my wrist once more : to-night the summons will come for the last time. The forces of evil have hold upon me, and are hunting me to death. Shall I go mad, I wonder, before I die ? I will not have it said that I committed suicide. I have been murdered—murdered as surely as if I had been stabbed to the heart, done to death by devils and the powers of darkness !

My God ! what a fate is mine—to die—to die so young—in such a way ! It is very late. They will be wondering why I have not come down to the ward.

I am waiting—waiting here for the call. What is that ? Those eyes ! O God ! O God !

\* \* \* \* \*

Some time ago the body of a young woman, dressed in a

nurse's uniform, was discovered floating in the river by some bargemen and brought ashore.

The foregoing extraordinary narrative was found in her pocket. The body bore no marks of violence, with the exception on the left wrist of *five large bruises*, like the impress of powerful fingers. A verdict of temporary insanity was of course brought in at the inquest.

The facts came under my notice as police-surgeon, and I had the curiosity to make some inquiries at St. Peter's in connection with the astonishing story left behind by the unfortunate girl. The authorities were at first extremely reticent, but I had the good luck to be acquainted with one of the house physicians, and on my showing him the manuscript he offered the following explanation of the events therein described :

Some years ago a woman was brought to St. Peter's by the police in an apparently dying condition. In a fit of jealousy, she had murdered her husband, and had then attempted her own life by cutting her throat. She was a terrible patient, resisting all attempts at treatment, cursing nurses and doctors ; and finally, finding herself recovering, she eluded her attendants one foggy night and drowned herself in the river beneath the hospital windows.

Now comes the incredible part of the story. A tradition arose, no one exactly knew how, that about the time of her death—that is to say, in the month of November—a figure resembling her had been seen about the hospital corridors, tall, gaunt, clothed in black, the neck bandaged, *exactly as Nurse Graham describes her supposed assailant.*

Whether this unhappy girl was really more sensitive to supernatural influences than those around her, whether she was really the special object of the attacks of a malignant spirit, as she herself believed, or whether she was simply hysterical and subject to delusions, I leave to the decision of those better able to judge. In justice to her, I have given publicity to her narrative. I offer no comment.

KATHARINE F. HILLS.

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## The Engineer's Story.

By F. B. FORESTER.

### I.

"YOU don't believe in that sort of thing?" said my friend the mining engineer. "Well, I'm not altogether with you there. Not that I profess to explain these phenomena, mind you: the longer I live and the more I knock about in the world—and I've been a rolling stone all my life—the more the conviction is borne in upon me that there are things taking place round us, every day some of 'em, that won't bear explanation. What you've just told me may be classed among them; probably it is: I don't profess to explain it. For my own part—well, considering the infinitesimal particle we can guess at—I'll scarcely say know—of the mysteries around us in this world, I'm generally inclined to put down the fellow who's on his feet ready with a cut-and-dried explanation of things verging on the confines of the next as a ten times bigger fool than the one who's content to admit frankly that he doesn't know. You needn't wince, young man; I don't mean you; but I tell you honestly that if you *had* tried to give me a cocksure explanation of what you've just told me, I'd have meant you then, and no mistake. Just put the case before yourself for a moment. A hundred, even fifty years ago, and where was the world then? Think of the advances, the discoveries of science, the inventions of genius, even within that limited number of years. Yet the forces, the elements themselves, brought into play and combination, were all originally there, mind you; they have not been called into existence now or suddenly; and who's to say that we've come to an end of all the secrets locked up in this earth of ours? On my word, I think there was never a time at which a man need show himself to be more careful and less presuming and confident than at the close of this nineteenth century."

"Something behind all this, eh?"

"Well, yes, there is, though I should not have thought of it just now if you hadn't recalled it by talking of that case of telepathy. That's a new word since I went to school, by the way, an instance bearing on what I said just now. We're not all cast in the same mould I know: there's no man

more willing to admit that than I am ; and this everyday world of ours clamours for so much of our time and attention that some of us have little thought or leisure, as a rule, for things lying outside its sphere. But I've a notion that, no matter how immersed and engrossed a man may be with the pressing claims of this money-getting, blood-and-brain-grinding world, there comes to him somewhere and somewhen in his life a breath from somewhere beyond, what you might call a waft or a whisper from the other world. Laugh at it if you like, it's a theory founded on observation, at any rate. Well, now for my story. By the way, what I've to tell you didn't take place in England, but in Spain."

"Spain!"

"Ah, now you prick up your ears. Romance on foot, I suppose you think. Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but there's nothing of the sort. I didn't go to the Peninsula to pick up romances. I went to earn my bread at the Rio Tinto mines, down at Huelva. You've heard before from me what sort of place that was, so I needn't enlarge on it now. Not that I had any cause to dislike it, rather the contrary. I liked the hands well enough—a civil, docile, fairly industrious set when you took 'em the right way, I always found them—and I got on in that quarter as well as I could wish."

"Lonely?"

"Well, yes, it was a bit lonely. You see, I was a young chap then, and shy, with a hang-in-the-background sort of way about me, and I didn't care to chum up overmuch with the engineers and the rest of the English staff. Ferguson, the chief, was as good-hearted a fellow as you'd wish to see ; but he had a great notion of keeping us youngsters in our places, and he talked shop *ad nauseam*. Now I didn't want to talk shop : out of sight, out of mind, was my motto then as far as the mines were concerned ; I didn't see the fun, after being stived up in the mine all the blessed day, of wagging my tongue about it all night ; and as I'd a precious deal rather be on the earth than in it, I spent my Sundays and leisure time generally in long solitary rambles in the surrounding country. The peasantry round soon got to know me, and I to know them—what's more, to like them. I've not had much experience of the town-bred Spaniard, but the Spanish peasant, take him for all in all, is a fine fellow, God-fearing, tem-

perate, and as honest as the day. So, as I say, I soon got to like them, and I seldom passed a house without being given door and chair, that's to say, without an invitation to come in and sit down, of which I was seldom slow to avail myself.

"Well, one afternoon—a Sunday it was—I had started off on a long tramp, intending to call at the farmhouse of a certain Diego Sordo, a friend of mine, and finish the evening there. Yes, he had a pretty daughter, but that fact was nothing to me. Marta Sordo was engaged to young Juan Hermoso, the best-looking lad in the district, and never gave two thoughts to your humble servant, and I—well, whatever else I might be, I wasn't the fellow to try to cut in between two happy young lovers and try to spoil sport. I had got well-nigh to the end of my walk, and the *cortijo* of Sordo was already showing white against the hill rising to the west of the valley, when I caught the sound of a queer dull noise repeated at intervals, and coming from beyond a massive shoulder of rock that blocked the view to the left. There were goats about in swarms, and I took it to be nothing else than the clashing of the horns of a brace of billies having a set-to on their own account. Ever seen two goats fight? Well, it's a curious sight; there's something scientific in the way they go about it. A ram, you know, goes straight for his enemy, trusting to the hardness of his forehead, but a goat gets up on his hind-legs and swings himself round with a sidelong sweep, making his horns tell, and a nasty knock he can give with them, you may be bound. Thinking I might as well see the fun, I went out of my way and rounded the shoulder of rock, and you can judge what kind of a surprise I got when, instead of a couple of he-goats, I came upon two men fighting.

"Jove! how they went at it! tooth and nail, I was going to say, only it was worse than that. No good honest bout with fisticuffs this, but a regular set-to with *navajas*. Know what I mean by a *navaja*? A knife, my lad, with a blade as long as your hand, straight-backed, and with the blade sloping, so; and an ugly thing it looks as the sun catches it, and you fancy it looks keen for your heart's blood. They practise the use of them, I am told, so they ought to be able to handle them fairly well; and, to judge by the play these two made, I should say there's no doubt of it. An ugly sight it was to see those two fellows going at it in that lonely hollow, silently, with not a sound but the hard breathing,



the noise of their feet as they shifted ground, and now and then a grating jar that made my blood run cold as steel struck hard on steel. 'Pon my word, the sight looked so out-of-date, so odd a thing in these days, when men fight through the medium of a lawyer and break each other's hearts instead of heads, that, even in the brief moment I stood watching the pair, my mind had jumped back to all the sword-play I'd read about in Walter Scott and the rest of them.

"I couldn't see the face of the one with his back towards me, but I knew the other at once. A big, muscular ruffian, with a phiz that a satyr might have been proud to own, and the look on it just then made me shiver. He'd got a touch on the forehead, and the blood trickling down made him look none the prettier; but I don't mean that. I'd never seen such a look of concentrated hate and devilish revenge on the face of man before, and I knew, just as well as if he'd shouted it in my ear, that, whatever the other might mean, this one at any rate meant death. You can guess I didn't stand there long looking at them; I wasn't going to see two fellows make mincemeat of each other without having a word to say in the matter, and I let no grass grow under my feet as I ran towards them, whipping out my revolver—a handy little weapon which I never stirred without—as I ran. We had about two murders per week on an average in Rio Tinto at that time, so you may think none of us cared to go about unarmed. But, hard though I laid foot to the ground, I was too late. Whether my shout startled him and made him lose his nerve for an instant, or whether he set foot on a loose stone, I don't know, but the one with his back towards me, whose face I had never seen, staggered a pace or two backwards, and went down like a ninepin.

"T'other brute was on top of him in a moment, and my heart jumped and I couldn't see straight exactly as his arm came up and the dull blue blade gleamed in his hand before it went down and disappeared. For the life of me, I durstn't fire, lest I should hit the other, but I crammed on the pace all I knew how. Up came the arm again for another stroke. This time, to my fancy, the blade shone red, and I thought the other was a goner. But in that space of time I'd made good running, and just as the scoundrel was bringing down his arm for the second time, the gleam in his eyes showing worse than the knife, he caught sight

of the muzzle of my little revolver looking at him, heard it bark, and felt the bullet graze his hair as I risked all and let fly.

"He couldn't stand that. He was on his feet *instantly*, and running like a greyhound for cover. I just snapped another cartridge after him, by way of lending additional wings to his heels, and then I stooped down to see to the other.

"He was only a youngster, not more than eighteen, or nineteen at the outside, and I couldn't help thinking, as I went down on one knee beside him, how his mother would have felt to see him lying there white and still. Dead too, as I thought, for his jacket and shirt were full of blood to the left, and I made no doubt that the knife, aimed for his heart, had reached its mark, and sent him to the 'other neighbourhood,' which is the pretty little euphemism they use for out of the world. I never remember feeling more glad in my life than when I'd got at the wound and found that the knife had merely glanced off the ribs, having done no mortal damage, as far as I could tell. I'd had no ambulance training, but there are worse teachers than common sense at times, and unnerved though I felt—for I'd seen nothing of this sort before, mind you—I kept my wits about me, and did my best. I stanchd the bleeding as well as I could, bound up the wound, getting off the *faja*—that's the coloured sash he wore round his waist—and using it for a bandage, and then I began to wonder what I was to do next.

"There was no good shouting ; the house was too far away, and I might have yelled myself hoarse without anything hearing me except goats and crows, or maybe a fox or two. I dared not leave him lying there, either, while I ran to get help. For all I knew, yon ruffian might be lurking close at hand, and I'd seen enough to know that he'd have no scruples as regarded coming back to finish his work. There was only one way, and I had to take it. I'm six feet now, you'll observe, and although no more than two-and-twenty at the time, I was no less then, and broad in proportion ; the lad was slightly built, and, to judge by the look of him, not much of a weight, so I got my arms under him and heaved him up without more ado. Poor lad ! he moaned piteously as I lifted him, and I dreaded, in spite of all my plugging and bandaging, to see the wound break out again before my eyes. But there was no help for it, so I set my teeth hard and pushed forward, keeping my eyes skinned and going, as they

say there, 'with the beard on the shoulder' all the way. Somehow I couldn't, for the life of me, get rid of the notion of that blackguard's coming up behind with swift, noiseless footsteps to plant his knife alongside my backbone, and every now and then I kept facing sharply round, with the senseless boy in my arms, to make sure that he was not dogging me. In that case, there would have been nothing for it but to drop my burden and defend him and myself as best I might; and my blood being up by this time, not to say that the handling of the lad and his utter defencelessness had roused the pity in me, I candidly own that, although I was in ignorance of the rights of the case, I would have let fly at the scoundrel without hesitation if he had showed as much as the ridge of his broken nose. How I thanked Heaven for that revolver during the bad quarter of an hour spent between yon hollow and the farmhouse!

"I shouted loud enough to wake the dead as soon as I got within hail, and Diego Sordo himself, with his daughter, her lover, and one or two of the servants, came crowding out one after the other, thinking the world was coming to an end. What they must have thought when they saw me coming staggering up the slope, with an apparently dead man in my arms—for, by the way, his head lay back on my shoulder, you'd have taken him for that—and with blood-stains all over my clothes, I didn't know, and didn't care either. Between the exertion and the excitement I was about done for; and heartily glad was I to see young Juan Hermoso clear the hedge of prickly pear at a leap, and come speeding down the slope like a roebuck to meet me.

"*'Dios mio!'* cried he the moment he clapped eyes on the youngster. 'It is Alvaro Desmayo!'

"*'You know him, then?'* I gasped, as well as I could speak for panting.

"*'Yes, señor, well. I know the meaning of this, too,'* he added, looking at the unconscious lad more closely. 'You have done bravely, señor; allow me to assist you now.'

"Diego and his daughter had come up by this time, and the latter, at a word from her father, sped back to the house to warn her mother and to prepare a bed for the wounded lad, whom her lover and his prospective parent carried between them. I was only too glad to resign him to them, for I can tell you I had had about enough.

"There had been a woman in the case, it appeared, from what I learned from Juan. There always is, of course ; but this time, for a wonder, it was not jealousy. Alvaro Desmayo had a sister, and the ruffian who had so nearly made an end of him just now had offered the girl an insult so bitter that no fellow with the feelings of a man would have thought for a moment of allowing it to pass. The sympathies of Marta's lover were all on his side, of course ; and I needn't say that mine ranged themselves alongside as soon as I knew the rights of the case. I didn't blame him, not a bit ; and right glad was I when, an hour or so later, I was told that the patient was conscious, and anxious to see and to speak to the brave *caballero ingles* who had saved his life.

"One's inclined to fancy, you know, when one hears of two fellows fighting to the death with knife-blades, that there must be something tigerish about them. I don't know how it might be with Pepe Tuerto—the ruffian was well named, by the way, for he had as one-sided a phiz as you'd see anywhere—but there was nothing tigerish about Alvaro Desmayo. After all, we've our way of doing things, and they've theirs ; and, for all I know, the notion of setting to with one's fists might suggest gorillas to them. He was only a lad, as I said, and a handsome lad, too, now that the blood-stains were gone, and I'd time to look at him ; indeed, so delicate and finely cut were his features, and so slight his make, that when he glanced up at me from the lace-edged pillow—they're keen on that sort of thing in Spain, and a mud-floored cottage will have bed-linen that wouldn't disgrace a palace—I'm blessed if I didn't think at the first look that the soft dark grey eyes, bordered with lashes close on half an inch long, were those of a young girl. I saw my mistake in a moment, of course : his features might be delicate, but there was nothing effeminate about him. They had put him to bed, and Diego Sordo, who knew something about surgery, had dressed the ugly gash in his side, so that he was fairly comfortable ; but he had lost a lot of blood, and could scarcely speak. He looked up at me, and his eyes did his tongue's work for him ; and I—well, when I saw him like that, remembered the ghastly wound I'd seen, that had so nearly let his life out, and knew that it had been all for the sake of his sister, I—I—well, by Jove, I could do nothing but think of mine, and stand there looking like a great baby, gripping his slender olive fingers a good deal harder than I meant

to, and grinning like an ape, just because the confounded tears were so nearly running over. But he never winced, only smiled. He didn't say much, good reason why: he was too weak; and the Señora Sordo, his self-constituted nurse, kept breaking in with her 'Quiet, quiet, boy,' on what he did say the whole of the time, pulling herself up to offer apologies to the *caballero ingles*, 'but it was not well for the *muchacho* to talk.' However, I understood that he wished to thank me with all his heart for the service I had done him, and to place himself at my disposal for the rest of his life.

"I didn't take much notice of that, for, you see, the very first thing etiquette enjoins on a Spaniard is to place himself, his house and family, *á la disposicion de usted*; so I grinned again, nodded, and told him it was all right. We mayn't like to admit the fact, but there's no denying that the foreigners have the pull of us in giving or accepting thanks—a Spaniard doesn't know what it is to be awkward. But Alvaro was evidently in earnest this time, for the blood came up over his olive face, he murmured a word or two that I did not catch, and then traced on the counterpane the sign of the cross with his delicate fingers. Juan, who was standing by, told me afterwards, when he was walking back with me to Rio Tinto, that Alvaro had sworn on the cross to serve me whenever I should have need of him. Peasant! Yes, he was a peasant; but there's this about the Spanish peasantry: that they're born, live, and die gentlemen to the core, and you'll never find better breeding or manners than among them.

"He had a hard time of it, poor lad, from what I could find out. Fever set in, and he had a stiff fight to pull through. I used to come up now and again to ask after the boy; I could not see him; and they told me at last that he was mending, and his strength coming back. As for Pepe Tuerto, *se despidió á la francesa*; that's to say, he took French leave, and we were no more troubled with him at Rio Tinto. I didn't stay there much longer myself, for I was sent to England on business long before Alvaro Desmayo's wound had skinned over, or he himself was about again; and although I heard incidentally from time to time that he was going on well, I never saw him again living. I had no more to do with Spain for six or eight years; and this time the contract I was on took me up north to superintend the working



of a copper mine not far from the southern slopes of the Pyrenees. By the time I was settled there, and had got things shipshape about me, all the incidents that had taken place at Rio Tinto had long ago faded from my memory.

## II.

"THAT'S the first part of my story. Now for the second.

"It was a different climate and a different country up north, I can tell you. Down in Andalusia snow had been an unknown quantity, but up on the slopes of the Pyrenees we had more than enough of it. Dreary surroundings they were in winter, and dismal enough I'd find it when I sat at night in the lonely little office near the shaft of the mine, and listened to the wind moaning and shrieking down from the mountains and to the bare arms of the pine-trees clashing together in the forest close at hand. Somehow I always used to think of the old stories about murderers' bones rattling on the gibbets whenever I heard that noise, and I'll candidly own that, between that kind of scare and another more tangible dread, I got the jumps badly at times. The people in that part of the country were not over-reputable, as a whole ; taken all in all, the district had a bad name ; and I, as a stranger, a heretic, and, in view of the mines being owned by an English company, an interloper into the bargain, found little goodwill come my way. There's no good denying that when, sitting there alone at night, the thought of a surprise by half a dozen armed ruffians and of being flung, living or dead, down the open mouth of the shaft, would come over me, I needed to summon all the nerve I'd got to induce myself to stop another night in the place.

"D'you remember yon bit in the 'Spanish Student,' 'Are there robbers in these mountains?' 'Yes, and worse than that—wolves?' Well, those words used to come to my mind often enough, for they exactly hit the case in point. There were enough about of both kinds of the gentry to suit any decent man ; and I, for my part, had more than I wanted of them. I didn't so much mind the wolves ; they were cowardly brutes, and I had good allies in the shape of a brace of revolvers, and a friend on whom I could rely to the last gasp : my dog. Know the breed ? They use them to guard the sheep and cattle, not unlike a St. Bernard, great, powerful brutes, with a grip like a bull-dog's ; and I tell

you when rigged out with what's called a *carlanca*—that's a stout leather collar, studded round with spiked nails—he'd be a bold wolf that would dare to come to close quarters with one. My dog—Toro I called him, partly because the village he came from bore that name, partly, too, because his big, massive head and curly front always put me in mind of a polled Angus bull owned by my father—was game any day of his life to settle the biggest dog-wolf ever whelped ; and he'd done it, too. So, as I say, I cared little for the wolves. But the human wolves ! Well, Toro could do his part there, too ; and he was a friend on whom bribery and corruption were thrown away. But still, as I told you, I didn't half like it, more particularly on the nights before pay-day, when all my hands had gone down to the village for the night, and I found myself with not a soul near me, in yon lonely shanty close to the mouth of the yawning shaft, with over a thousand pounds in specie in the safe, no company but a dog, and the half-mile of forest that lay between me and human companionship swarming with wolves, and possibly with worse.

“ You'll wonder when I'm coming to the point of my story. Well, it's pretty near now.

“ The last night I ever spent there alone was a stormy one. The wind had been high all day, but it increased towards night-fall, and roared in the pine-trees like demons broken loose. Next day was pay-day, I'd a cool thousand in silver locked up in my safe, and I felt, as I always did on such nights, the responsibility strongly. It was with me as with most of us, you see : on each successive pay-night the realization of the tremendous risk I was running would come on me so heavily that I would make up my mind dead certain to represent the danger in the proper quarter before the next came round. But somehow with the return of the bright daylight, in the society of my fellows and the excitement and engrossment of my work, such thoughts melted away ; if they ever crossed my mind I'd call myself a fool and a coward, but as a rule I'd think no more of them till the next time. However, on that night I could not rest. I've heard people talk of presentiments, and to me there's nothing strange in them. Why should not some secret and sensitive part of our being detect and foresee danger, and do its best to warn the individual ? You may argue that some have never been conscious of such warnings. I answer that no two human beings are alike,



and that certain sensations affect individual temperaments to a degree of which others, differing from them in susceptibility or even in organization, have no idea whatever. Who dreams of denying that the pain which one man regards as a mere flea-bite is capable of conveying to another the most exquisite torture? I'm suggesting, not dogmatizing, here, remember. I hold that we know too little of these matters to dogmatize on them.

"Well, as I say, I felt strangely ill at ease. I had books, but I couldn't read them, letters to write home, but I couldn't give my mind to them ; and I spent most of the evening pacing up and down the length of my little cabin. It was a small place, twelve by nine feet or so, with the door and window at one end, and the fireplace at the other. Fireplace for me, thank ye ! I'd had enough of *braseros* down south and on my journeys, so I'd rigged up a grate that burnt splendidly, and the blazing knots of pine-wood hissed and sputtered there, throwing out a grand heat. On one side of the hearth was my bed, on the other my arm-chair. I never sat in front of the fire ; I never fancied turning my back on the door ; and my desk, chair, and the safe behind them occupied the corner directly opposite to it, giving me a full view of whoever entered, while Toro lay before the fire like a slumbering bullock. Now and then he'd cock one ear and listen in his dreams, as a weird howl from the forest sounded nearer than usual, but for the most part he lay motionless, toasting his huge side and snoring audibly. I've spanned that dog as he lay : he touched over six feet from nose to tail ; and when he stood up on his hind-legs he could put a paw on each of my shoulders and lick my face without stretching his neck.

" ' Dick Cameron, my lad, you're a fool and a nervous idiot,' I said to myself at last, finding that the unaccountable restlessness showed no signs of diminishing. ' Get to bed, you duffer, and sleep it off.' "

"No, my lad, I didn't fortify myself with brandy. I was no believer in Dutch courage at any time, and you take my word for it that if there's one man more than another who needs to keep his head clear and cool at his work, that man's a mining engineer. So, if you think that brandy or any other stimulant has to be taken into account as regards what I'm going to tell you, you never made a bigger mistake in your life. I looked to the fastening of the door, made up the fire, laid matches and the

brace of barkers close to my hand, patted and spoke to the dog, and threw myself on the bed, taking off nothing but my coat and hoping that the next thing of which I should be conscious would be morning looking in at the window. The key of the safe and one or two other valuables nothing ever induced me to part with, and I always carried 'em in a belt round my waist. My restlessness seemed to have communicated itself to Toro, for he refused to lie down, stalking round the room and sniffing in every corner, and at last, when he got tired of that, evincing a disposition to share my bed. On one occasion, when my stock of firewood had given out, and the frost had laid its icy fingers on me, he had lain at my back all night, and the heat of his huge frame had kept the life in me. But I didn't want him that time, so I kicked him off, ordering him to lie down, and he subsided on the hearth like a moderate-sized lion.

"I don't know what roused me, but I started suddenly wide awake. The fire lay a hot and glowing heap beyond the bars, by which I concluded that some hours had passed in the interval, and the shadows hung black and mysterious all round the place. For an instant I did not see the dog; then a low, savage growl drew my attention in the direction of the door. There he stood, his nose close to the foot of it, his huge tail waving backwards and forwards, every hair on his body on end with excitement, while he kept up *gurr-r gurr-r*, that fierce, deep monotone of a growl. I was on my feet in an instant, gripping with each hand at a revolver, just as my ears caught the faint sound of stealthy footsteps on the snow outside.

"Wolves! Yes, my lad, but the human ones! As I'm here, living before you, I tell you I could hear the low-toned voices without. In that one moment I had made up my mind what to do. Thank God, door and window were in close contact. Toro would keep the one—I could trust him for that—and I turned to guard the other. It was barred across, and could hold its own, and I swung round to drag the desk forward, intending to make that barricade the door still further. In that instant, as I turned, I saw that I was not alone. On the hearth, his back to the fire, stood the figure of a man.

"How or by what means he had entered, I know not, but he was there. The red glow of the fire outlined the tall figure, dark, motionless, and erect. For an instant, utterly taken by surprise,

I stood staring, forgetful, in my complete amazement, of the threatening danger without. Then remembrance came back, and I started forward. Had one of them, by some means of which I was ignorant, already forced his way in? At the same moment the fire, leaping into a sudden blaze, irradiated my visitant from head to foot . . . As I live, it was Alvaro Desmayo!

"The same as when I had last seen him, allowing for the difference that eight years had wrought on him by changing the lad into a man. He was wrapped in a long dark cloak, the upper part flung round his face so that the mouth was concealed—*embozado* is the word for what I mean—but all that I could see of him told me that he was Desmayo, and no other. I should have known his profile anywhere. I sprang forward, holding out an eager hand and calling him by name.

"He neither spoke nor stirred. I was going to say he did not look at me, only that I caught the gleam of his eyes fixed on me with a strange, mournful intensity, which yet had something repelling in it, and checked my advance, I hardly knew why. One would have thought that the frost had got into the cabin, for the air had grown suddenly cold, and the strange thing was that the icy chill seemed to emanate from the glowing fire.

"Till that moment I had forgotten Toro. But now, the fear strong on me that the great brute, savage as a lion with strangers, might spring on Desmayo unawares, I swung round, seized the animal by the collar, and turning his head in the direction of the fire, dragged him forward, pointing to the dark, shadowy figure and repeating: '*Amigo, Torito, amigo!*' I meant him to understand that the stranger was a friend.

"What did the dog do? I'll tell you. The great beast, capable of worrying the life out of a man as easily as I would kill a kitten, dropped his tail between his legs and rushed backwards, his eyes starting from his head, until the door brought him up short, and he sank to the floor, crouching and whining in mortal fear. Then, for the first time, the conviction that no mortal presence stood there came over me. The air of the cabin struck like death on my face and hands, my skin crept, and I felt the hair suddenly bristle on my scalp.

"Toro had dragged me back with him to the end of the place; his huge bulk lay against the heavy door, and I, beneath the window, could plainly hear the sounds from outside. The

stealthy, cat-like footsteps were close up to the shanty now ; only a few inches of plank lay between the threatening danger and myself. I could hear the voices, even distinguish a word or two, ominous in their significance : ‘ *The dog—alone—the window !* ’

“ They were evidently reconnoitring. I could hear the hard breathing now, then a scraping noise on the boards told me what they were about, and presently a face, ghastly in the uncertain light, showed at the window above my head, the eyes looking towards the further end where my bed stood. Opposite to the window, the outline of the dark figure thrown into strong relief against the lurid light beyond, stood that motionless visitant. The face disappeared, and through the planks came a low, scared whisper : ‘ *No está solo ; hay otro* ’ ( ‘ He is not alone ; there is another ’ ). Then an unbroken silence. Heaven knows how long we kept that awful vigil, the dog, myself, and that unknown presence by the fire. It lasted until a low murmur succeeded to the dead silence, and then the footsteps died away on the snow.

“ The morning light was pouring into the shanty, when I was roused by the dog licking my face, and lifted my head to find myself lying on the floor beneath the window, while my *capataz*, or foreman, just come up from the village, was hammering outside with all his might and shouting to me at the pitch of his voice to know if anything was wrong. He stared at me when I unbarred the door and let him in, declaring that I looked as if I had seen a spirit. I told him shortly that I had been pretty nearly made a spirit of, at any rate, and without more words sent him packing for the Civil Guards.

“ Yes, the blackguards were taken, and one of them, the owner of the face I had seen at the window, owned up candidly that their knowledge of the money in my charge had induced them to plan an attack on me by night, believing me to be alone. Needless to ask what had been their intentions with respect to me. Asked what had deterred them, he answered promptly, the finding that I had a companion. He had looked through the window, he himself, to ascertain that the señor—pointing to me—was asleep, and had seen another man, a stranger, standing with his back to the fire. It was not the Señor Cameron, whose features and appearance were perfectly well known to the speaker ; this had been one whom he did not recognise—a youth, tall and dark, shrouded and muffled in his *capa*. When I heard that, I

turned cold and sick. Until then, d'ye see, I had been clinging to the notion that it had been all a dream. I never spent another night in the shanty alone.

"Sequel, eh? Well, yes, there is a sequel. After that, I wrote straight off to a chum of mine at Rio Tinto, enjoining him to find out every detail relating to Alvaro Desmayo, and in particular to ascertain his whereabouts on the date I gave him. I knew before I opened his letter what the answer would be, and my surmise proved correct. As was proved by a careful comparing of time, Alvaro Desmayo had quitted this mortal life at the very moment when his spirit, as I must call it for want of knowing better, appeared to act as a safeguard to me in that lonely shanty on that never-to-be-forgotten night.

"What do I think of it? Well, a man prefers to keep that sort of experience, with his opinion on it, to himself, as a rule. But you gave me your views frankly enough on what you told me, so I'll be quits with you here. Whether the consciousness of his unfulfilled oath weighed on him, and he could not leave earth in peace, or whether, in some fuller knowledge coming to the disembodied spirit, the sense of my peril reached him, and he was permitted to linger before taking flight elsewhere to come to my help when I had sore need of him, He who has the keeping of us here and hereafter alone knows. That his likeness, his spirit, appeared to me, and by its presence saved me from being murdered in cold blood, I am as sure of as that I am living now. The rest must remain a mystery."

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## **The Librarian of Castle Douglas.**

By **RUSSELL SIDNEY.**

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Up, up, up, so slowly, so laboriously! Would the long hill-climb never come to an end, or was I for the rest of my mortal life to remain penned up in this lumbering old fly, with this equally ancient and decrepit charioteer and the stumbling, broken-down horse?

It seemed like it. For three long hours had I been immured in this jolting country vehicle, jogging leisurely along any level portions of road, which were few and far between, but more often toiling up interminable hills, each appearing longer and steeper than the last; and as the day became darker and colder, the scenery assumed to my eyes, in the grey autumnal light, ever a more forbidding aspect.

I certainly felt no enthusiasm on my first acquaintance with the land of the brawny Scot. The vast stretches of moor looked so bleak and desolate; the cold, stony hills, towering above and around, sometimes appearing to barricade all further advance along the barren, rock-strewn valley through which our road lay, had nothing on that late autumn afternoon of the soft, smiling beauty of Wales, where my own home was situated. In fact, I felt too tired, cross, and hungry to admire a paradise if it had been suddenly revealed to my eyes, for I had not enjoyed a single half-hour's rest or a satisfactory repast since I had started by the night-mail for my present destination.

I was cross with the perverseness of human nature, because this long, wearisome drive was all of my own seeking. By a little forethought and an ounce of common sense I might have been then sitting behind a pair of blood horses, going ten miles an hour, with the additional pleasure of congenial companionship and the certainty of arriving at my journey's end before night overtook me, a consummation devoutly to be wished, but appear-

ing exceedingly problematical at my present slow rate of advancement. But wilful woman will have her way, and pay for it afterwards with inconsequent vain regret.

My old and dearest schoolfellow, Mary Douglas, having completed her two years at a finishing academy at Brussels, had written asking me to fulfil a promise long made to visit her in her Scotch home, to which she had just returned. The house, she wrote, was full of guests—a bright, cheerful party of young people. Would I join them as soon as I could, at least in time to take part in some theatricals that were to come off next week? If I sent a letter by return saying I would start the next day, I should be met at the station, twelve miles from Castle Douglas, by Mary herself, and driven to her home in her own mail phaeton behind “such a pair of chestnuts—real beauties!” Mary was always devoted to riding and driving, and was, moreover, a famous whip. But the best-laid plans of mice and men are prone to fail. When Mary’s letter arrived I was from home for a day or two. On my return I found it would be too late to write my acceptance of her invitation. A telegram, to my economical mind and for the slender resources of my scantily furnished purse, was out of the question (a shilling per mile from the station in those days); I therefore determined to answer my friend’s letter in *propria persona*, feeling assured that I should not be an unwelcome guest, and that no time was to be lost in learning my part in the proposed theatricals if I was to acquit myself creditably.

I must confess that my dear mother, who detested surprises herself or any breach of the conventional, was both shocked at and antagonistic to my erratic line of conduct; but for many years I had always settled matters for myself, and did not, I fear, pay such attention to her remonstrances as the occasion warranted.

And this was the result. It was only with the greatest difficulty I had been able to procure this primitive conveyance in the little village near the railway station, the inhabitants even looking askance at a visitor for Castle Douglas who was not met by any of the family, nor the dog-cart sent for her baggage.

I put my head out of the window for the twentieth time during that long, dreary drive.



"When shall we get to the Castle? Is it near now?" I queried in accents of despair.

"It is so," replied my ancient Jehu, in slow, measured tones. "Atop o' the hill we com' on the lodge gates, and abou' ha' a mile ye'll be by the Castle"

Cheered by the near prospect of friends, tea, and fire, I bestowed more lively interest on my surroundings; and as we breasted the hill could not refrain from an exclamation of delight, so much fairer was the view than any that had before met my eyes.

The road took a sharp turn down a steep declivity into a verdant, sheltered vale, in the midst of which stood out in all its turreted picturesqueness a fine old mediæval building. Beautiful pine and birch woods clothed the hillsides, but immediately environing the Castle was a well-timbered park, with lovely grassy glades and sylvan vistas. The last gleams of an autumn sun hitherto obscured by clouds glinted the whole with a mellow golden light.

The old horse, on the strength of going downhill, and perhaps inspired with the knowledge that rest and oats awaited him, pricked up his ears and went at a good steady pace along the carriage drive, soon coming to a standstill in front of the ivy-covered entrance. A prolonged ring brought a footman to the door.

I asked for Miss Douglas. Mrs. Douglas had been dead some years, and the young and only daughter was now reigning supreme.

"Miss Douglas was out," replied the man.

Here was a poser!

I had only met Colonel Douglas once or twice in my school-days, when he had paid rare visits to his daughter, and I hardly liked meeting him without Mary's intervening presence. However, I asked for the colonel.

"None of the house-party are in 'at present. They are up the glen shooting, and are not expected back for another hour," answered James obsequiously, but with what I imagined a supercilious and malicious delight at my visible discomfiture.

"I am come to stay—at least, Miss Douglas does not expect me to-day," I began helplessly, becoming more confused and incoherent under the man's blank, unblinking stare. "I

had better come in and wait for Miss Douglas," I stammered forth.

The cab-door was opened, and alighting, I paid my old charioteer, asked for my boxes to be taken somewhere, *where* I did not care. I felt too mortified and worried to know what to do under the circumstances, and if the butler, an old, experienced retainer of the family, had not just then appeared, I believe James, suspicious of my manner and undignified arrival, would have offered me a seat in the hall as a crowning insult.

The butler, however, took matters in at a glance, ushered me through the fine old hall into a large but warm and cosy library, where a tea-table was laid out before a brisk log fire.

"Miss Douglas will be home shortly," the man remarked as he apologized for not showing me into the drawing-room, as the house-party always met before dinner in the library for afternoon tea. I should, however, have some refreshment brought to me at once, as I must be fatigued with the long drive.

Though I expostulated against any innovation of existing rules being made on my behalf, in a few minutes, while I had been warming my feet before the fire, he returned with a well-filled tray and left me to discuss a delicious cup of tea and some of the hot cakes for which the Scotch are so justly celebrated.

Having thoroughly enjoyed my meal, I looked round the room. It was wainscoted in dark oak. The ceiling was richly panelled, and had a finely carved cornice. Between the latter and the wainscot, the walls were lined with books, interspersed here and there by old family portraits on panel. Though not much of a bibliophile, I gathered at a glance that the collection was a choice and valuable one; but it was not the room so much as the view from it that mostly attracted my attention. Facing me as I sat was a deep bay-window, the upper portions filled in with priceless antique stained glass of exquisitely subdued colouring and the rest in mullioned squares. In the deep embrasures of the window were crimson-covered seats, while heavy curtains of the same hue hung soft and warm on each side of the bay. The window looked out upon the long avenue of beeches leading up to the Castle; beyond towered a purple heather-covered mountain, just catching the last rays of the sun, while the valley was fast being enwrapped in hazy shadows. It was this lovely combination of form and colouring that

attracted my eye, and rising from my seat, I walked straight up to the middle portion of the window, placed my knee on the cushioned seat, and looked out on the beautiful scene. There was not a sign of the expected party, but I was well content to remain alone, and in contemplation of what gave me such delight. I watched the afterglow fade from the mountain-top, the purple shadows deepen, and the blue-grey mist arise where I felt certain nearer inspection would reveal the neighbourhood of a stream or lake.

As I was laying plans as to which point of interest I would devote myself to in my first tour of investigation on the morrow, I was suddenly startled by hearing a gentle but most audible deep-drawn sigh just behind me.

I turned hastily round, and what was my astonishment to perceive, hidden away in the corner of the window nearest one of the heavy crimson curtains, with his back resting against the wall, his legs crossed, and on his knee a large and ancient-looking tome, a very diminutive and mild old gentleman, dressed in black velvet and characterized by a queer, old-fashioned cut about his garments that at once struck the eye!

He was looking down on his volume, and did not raise his head when I gave a very perceptible start and uttered a smothered "Oh!" of astonishment.

Evidently the old man had been in the room since my entrance. Concealed by the curtain, no one could have perceived his presence from the interior of the library; and when I had crossed rapidly over to the window I had glanced neither to right nor left, so riveted had been my gaze upon the outside scene.

Still it was not a pleasant thought to find that, himself unseen, this strange, unsociable old gentleman had been perchance silently criticising my every movement. I felt aggrieved at his taciturnity, and it was with some acrimony in my voice I gave vent to the feeling uppermost in my mind.

"I beg your pardon. I did not know *you* were here, or I would have spoken before."

The small silver-grey head rose slowly, and a pair of kind but age-dimmed eyes gazed mildly at me. The old man did not speak.

"I suppose he's deaf," I thought, and raising my voice slightly, I continued:

"Do you think the party will be long now? The evening closes in so quickly, they ought soon to be here."

No answer, and after that one placid look the quiet eyes returned to the study of the crabbed and ancient page.

"He's very rude or deaf, or perhaps not quite right in his head," I inwardly surmised after this second rebuff to my friendly conversational intentions; and seeing my mysterious companion did not evidently consider me worthy of a remark, I turned my back upon him with some hauteur and chagrin, to watch in the gathering gloom for the first glimpse of the returning sportsmen.

In a few minutes—I cannot tell how many—the short autumn day had closed, and the room was suddenly wrapped in darkness, except for the glimmering firelight. I was roused from my meditations by the entrance of the butler with a footman carrying lighted candles, and glancing hastily round on the embrasured corner, I was not a little surprised to find that my silent student had disappeared!

Before I could determine in my mind how he could have slipped away unperceived, voices were heard in the hall, and the next moment Mary Douglas's soft girlish arms were round me, and her hearty kisses pressing on my cheeks as she gave me a warm and appreciative welcome. She and her friends had come in through a side entrance, which accounted for my not seeing them.

She both praised and scolded me in the same breath for my unexpected appearance: the first, because I relieved her mind of great anxiety anent the theatricals; and the second, because I had not been met by the carriage and had had such an inhospitable reception on my first arrival.

"However," she cried, with her bright young voice, "here's papa and my brother Jack, my youngest brother, you know. Fred, the eldest, does not arrive till next week. He's coming home from India on leave."

Colonel Douglas spoke and looked a hearty welcome. I was introduced to the many visitors at the Castle, and we were soon a happy and merry party. By-and-by Mary took me up to my room, and what with chatting over past days, present plans, and future gaieties, I had no opportunity of making any inquiry regarding the old man in the library.

At the bright and beautifully appointed dinner-table I, however, glanced round at the assembled guests to see if he were among them ; but there was no one in the least corresponding to his appearance. In fact, it was a party composed chiefly of two or three young married couples, several youths and just newly emancipated schoolgirls.

"They were all her friends and Jack's," Mary informed me. "Papa and Fred would have all their staid old fogies later on."

After dinner we had music, singing, and an impromptu dance in the old oak-panelled hall, the most delightful pleasure of all to young blood and agile feet. It was late before, with candlestick in hand, I went along the corridor to my room, followed by Mary, who, with the excuse of seeing all was comfortable for the night, entered with me to enjoy a confidential chat, such as girls delight in, however late may be the hour and however detrimental to the duration of their beauty-sleep. Just as she was finally departing, after the third or fourth "Good-night," I suddenly remembered my silent companion in the library.

"By the bye, Mary," I asked, retarding her progress to the door, "who was that funny old gentleman I saw in the library before you came in ? I looked for him at dinner, but there was no one in the least like him at the table."

Mary turned round sharply. Her bright colour had faded suddenly as she answered quickly :

"Old gentleman ? What do you mean, Flora ? There's no one old staying in the house, no one older than papa, and you don't call him old, I hope."

"No, of course not !" I replied. "But this was a queer, old-fashioned man sitting in the big bay-window reading. Surely you know. He was dressed——"

Mary had come close up to me. Her eyes distended, her whole face expressing a fearful anxiety. She finished the sentence for me, clutching me round the wrist with a nervous, hysterical grasp.

"In black velvet ! A very little old man dressed in black velvet, reading out of a big book ? Oh, Flora, don't say you saw *him* ! Don't say it ! Don't say it !"

And she burst into a fit of violent weeping. Surprised and shocked, I soothed her as best I could ; but it was impossible to deny the evidence of my own eyes. I was obliged, moreover, to



acknowledge to the accuracy of the descriptive questions with which she hurriedly plied me.

"But who is he, dear? Why are you so distressed at my seeing him?" I asked in bewilderment, no suspicion of the truth as yet dawning on my mind.

Mary raised herself with an effort, and, checking her sobs, said slowly:

"Flora, you don't understand. Don't be frightened, dear; *he* can do *you* no harm. It's only the sign of evil to *us*, only trouble—death to one of our family! Didn't you see, dear, didn't you feel, that it was no living man you saw? It was the ghost of Castle Douglas!"

I must confess to a momentary weakness. I shivered, but recovered my composure the next second.

"Nonsense, Mary!" I replied with decision. "This old man was alive. I heard him sigh quite plainly, and he looked up at me. Surely he's your father's librarian?"

"Two hundred years ago he was the librarian here, and was devoted to the clan, saving the life of one of the Douglasses in one of the rebellions; and ever since, before any death in the family, he appears not to us, but to the greatest stranger in the house."

"Then I only wish he didn't!" I exclaimed with reprehensible levity.

Mary shook her head with sorrowful insistence.

"He came when my great-grandfather died; when his brother John was killed at Waterloo; when Uncle James was lost in the Khyber Pass; when grandpapa fell from his horse and was carried home dead. Oh, Flora, it's always true! and now who is the warning for? Not papa! oh, not papa!" she whispered shudderingly in an agonized tone. "And then there's Jack and dear old Fred. No, no, it can't be Fred! it would be too cruel, too hard, just coming home from India. Flora, Flora, say it's not Fred or papa!"

She was sobbing again hysterically. I was not superstitious, and had always treated ghost stories with the supercilious and amused contempt I deemed in my wisdom they deserved. I was still but half convinced in my mind that the figure I had seen had anything of the supernatural about it. I tried, therefore, every argument to prove the reality of the little old man in the library, and how substantially human he appeared to be.

It was all in vain ; and, comfortless and depressed, with her pretty brown eyes red with weeping, Mary at last departed to her room, having made me promise I would not mention what I had seen to a single soul.

In a puzzled and distressed state of mind, I also went to rest. I wished sincerely I had never set foot in Castle Douglas if my advent was the harbinger of evil tidings. A bright, sunny morning rather dispelled my gloomy thoughts ; and when I met Mary at the breakfast-table I was in hopes, on scanning her sweet, serene face, that she too had got the better of her superstitious fears ; but a second glance revealed to me that she was putting restraint on herself and striving by a forced gaiety to conceal a depressing anxiety. She afterwards, in a few moments of undisturbed conversation, confided to me that she could not throw off a foreboding of evil ; and, with tears welling in her eyes, she said her fears were for Fred, the dearly loved, idolized soldier-brother on his way home after a four years' absence in the East.

At luncheon that day Colonel Douglas mentioned his eldest son's expected return with much pride and pleasure.

"We Douglasses have always had a soldier in the Black Watch, Miss Morley," he remarked, addressing me ; "and though I didn't care much for my eldest boy to serve in India, he must take his turn with the rest. Our family have done great service to the Crown in our day, I can tell you, and Fred is not one to play at soldiering. He has got a medal and a clasp already for that frontier skirmish two years ago. But now it will be all play and no work. Next week there'll be grand doings to welcome him, and I'm glad you'll be here to witness a Highland fête. Let me see, Mary, next Thursday, isn't it, his ship arrives at Southampton ? It was signalled off Gibraltar three days ago ; but those old troopers are always slow and sure. However, he's coming home in command of his company, so I must not complain. I only trust he's got over that attack of fever he wrote about. Young men will be young men, Miss Morley ; and Fred will not take proper precautions when he goes pig-sticking. Always despises the sun till it bowls him over ; but he said he was nearly all right in his last letter to you, Mary, from Bombay ?"

His daughter gave a hurried assent. I pitied Mary's sorrowful, abstracted air ; but what could I say to comfort her ? It was the



first time I had encountered so deep-rooted a superstition, or had to counteract by logical common sense so morbid a presentiment.

Two days sped on, not joyously and lightly, as I had expected on my first arrival, but with a fateful oppression about them that I, for one, could not uplift. Mary tried her best to appear cheerful and unconcerned before her numerous guests. I could, however, see how great the strain was. She seemed to be always expecting some calamity, and at last she communicated a portion of her nervous excitement to me, till I found myself instinctively watching the opening of every letter and the arrival of any new-comer, besides feeling unconsciously relieved when either Colonel Douglas or Jack returned safe and sound after a short absence from the house.

"To-morrow," remarked the colonel on the evening of the fourth day of my visit, "we shall have Fred's telegram. He will send it off as soon as he arrives at Southampton, and we shall have him here, God willing, two or three days after."

I must confess to feeling horribly nervous and anxious for the appearance of that portentous yellow envelope. I furtively watched the carriage drive, and made many excuses for not leaving the house on the following day.

I saw Mary felt equally anxious and on the alert. Her white face was laughingly remarked on by her father, who begged her to welcome her brother with roses rather than lilies, as the former were certainly the most becoming.

We were all at dinner. Two or three of the party, seeing their young hostess silent and *distracte* and their host striving to keep up an appearance of interest in the general conversation, though his ears were evidently strained to catch the slightest sound, were doing their little best to keep up a desultory chatter, when a loud ring was heard at the hall-door.

"The telegram!" exclaimed both Mary and her father simultaneously.

Repressing their mutual anxiety with a praiseworthy effort for social *convenance*, they patiently awaited the arrival of the servant. Mary was trembling visibly, her face blanched and her fingers nervously interlaced. The colonel looked flushed and excited.

"Now we shall know when to expect him," he said with a proud gleam of light in his kind eyes, and just a little suspicious trembling of the lip under his long, tawny moustache.

After all, emotion was permissible. Fred was his first-born, his heir ; and he was returning to the home of his fathers.

The fatal yellow envelope was brought in on a salver and presented to his master by the grey-headed old butler with undisguised interest pervading his otherwise undemonstrative face.

Colonel Douglas tore open the paper. His eyes glanced rapidly down the sheet ; as they did so an awful change came over his countenance. His features quivered with intense excitement, and then grew dull, fixed, and ghastly.

The nearest guest sprang forward just in time to take the telegram from the nerveless hand as the colonel fell back in his chair in a deadly faint. Mary rushed wildly from the top of the table to her father's side.

"He's dead ! Fred's dead ! I know it !" she shrieked ; "I know it !" and she snatched the closely written sheet from her friend.

It was too true. I, looking over her shoulder, read the fatal words :

"Captain Douglas came on board ill with fever ; bad symptoms at Suez ; rapidly worse ; died at sea two days after leaving Gibraltar. Body at Southampton. We await orders from family."

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At the very hour of the day he died, the old librarian of Castle Douglas had appeared to me in the bay-window of the library !

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Since then I have never laughed at ghosts. Nor have I again trespassed on my friends' hospitality unexpectedly.



## **The Unbidden Guest.**

By F. B. FORESTER.

"No, sir," the old keeper said reflectively. "I don't know no ghost stories ; none as you'd care to hear, that is. But I could tell you of something that happened in these parts once, and it was as strange a thing as any ghost story I ever heard tell on."

I had spent the morning on the moor, grouse shooting, and mid-day had brought me for an hour's welcome rest to the lonely cottage where the old superannuated keeper, father to the stalwart velvet-jacketed Hercules who had acted as my guide throughout the forenoon, lived from year's end to year's end with his son and half-a-dozen dogs for company. The level beams of the glowing August sun bathed in a golden glow the miles of purple moorland lying round us ; air and scenery were good to breathe and to look on ; and now, as the three of us sat on a turf seat outside the cottage door enjoying the soft sleepy inaction of the afternoon, a question of mine concerning the folk-lore of the district, after which, hardened materialist though I called myself, I was conscious of a secret hankering, had drawn the foregoing remark from the patriarchal lips.

"Let's hear it by all means," said I, lighting my pipe and

settling myself preparatory to listening. A slight grunt, resembling a stifled laugh, came from Ben the keeper.

"You'll have to mind, sir," he put in, a twinkle in his eye. "Dad believes what he's agoing to tell you, every word of it. It's gospel truth to him."

"Ay, that I do," responded the old man warmly. "And why shouldn't I? Didn't I see it with my own eyes? And seein's believin', ain't it?"

"You arouse my curiosity," I said. "Let us have the story by all means, and if it is a personal experience, so much the better."

"Well, sir," began the old man, evidently gratified by these signs of interest, and casting a triumphant glance at his son, "what I've got to tell you don't belong to this time of day, of course. When I says I was a little chap of six years old or thereabouts then, and that I'll be eighty-five come Michaelmas, you'll understand that it must have been a tidy sight of years ago.

"Father, he was keeper on these moors here, same as his son's been after him, and as *his* son"—with a glance of fatherly pride at the stalwart young fellow beside him—"is now, and will be for many years to come, please God. Him and mother and me, the three of us, lived together in just such another cottage as this one, across t'other side of the moor, out Farnington way. The railway runs past there now, over the very place the cottage stands on, I believe; but no one so much as dreamt o' railways time I talk on. Not a road was near, and all around there was nothin' but the moors stretching away for miles, all purple ling and heather, with not a living soul nearer than Wharton, and that was a good twelve miles away. It was pretty lonely for mother, o' course, during the day; but she was a brave woman, and when dad come home at night, never a word would she let on to tell him how right down scared she got at times and how mortally sick she felt of hearing the sound of her own voice.

"'Been pretty quiet for you, Polly,' dad would say at night sometimes, when the three of us would be sitting round the fire, with the flame dancing and shining on the wall and making black shadows in all the corners.

"'Ye-es, so, so,' mother would answer, kind of grudging like, and then she'd start telling him what she'd been about all day, or something as I'd said or done, so as to turn his attention, you

see, sir. And as a woman can gen'rally lead a man off on whatever trail she likes to get his nose on, dad would never think no more about it ; and as for mother and me being that lonely, when he and the dogs were all away, why, I don't suppose the thought of it ever entered his head. So, what with her never complaining, and that, dad grew easier in his mind, and once or twice, when he'd be away at the Castle late in the afternoon, he'd even stay there overnight.

"Well, sir, one day when dad comes home to get his dinner he tells mother as how there's a lot of gentlemen come down from London for the shooting, and as he'd got orders to be on hand bright and early next morning, the meaning of that being that he'd have to spend the night at the Castle. Mother didn't say much ; 'twasn't her way to carry on when she knew a thing couldn't be helped, and dad went on talking.

" 'To-morrow's quarter-day, Polly, and you've got our rent all right for the agent when he comes. Put this along wi' it, lass, it's Tom Regan's, and he's asked me to hand it over for him and save the miles of walking.'

"I don't know what come to mother, whether something warned her, or what, but she give a sort of jump as dad spoke.

" 'Oh, Jim,' says she, all in a twitter, 'you're never going to leave all that money here, and you away, and the child and me all alone. Can't you—can't you leave one of the dogs ?'

"Dad stared at her. 'No,' he says, 'I can't, more's the pity. They're all wanted to-morrow, and I've sent them on to the Castle. Why, Polly, lass, what's come to you ? I've never known you take on like this before.'

"Then mother, seeing how troubled and uneasy he looked, plucked up heart and told him, trying to laugh, never to mind her—she had only been feeling a bit low, and it made her timid like. But dad didn't laugh in answer, only said very grave that if he'd ha' known she felt that way, he'd have took good care she wasn't ever left alone overnight. This should be the last time, he'd see to that, and anyhow he'd take the rent money with him and wouldn't leave it to trouble her. Then he kissed her, and kissed me, and went off, striding away over the moors towards Farnington—the sunset way I ca'led it, 'cause the sun set over there ; and I can see him, big and tall like Ben here, moving away among the heather till we lost him at the dip of the moor.

And I mind how, just before we saw no more of him, he pulled up and looked back, as if mother's words stuck to him, somehow, and he couldn't get them out of his mind.

"Mother seemed queer and anxious all that afternoon. Long before dusk she called me in from playing in the bit of garden in front of the door, and shut and barred it closely, not so much as letting me stand outside to watch the sunset, as I always liked to do. It was getting dark already, the shadows had begun to fall black and gloomy all round the cottage, and the fire was sending bright dancing gleams flickering up the wall, when I hears a queer, scratching, whining noise at the door

"Mother was putting out the tea-cups, and she didn't hear it, at first. But I, sitting in front of the fire, heard it well enough, and I tumbled off my stool and ran to the door to get it open, for I thought I knew what it was. But mother had pulled the bar across at the top and I couldn't stir it.

"'There's something at the door that wants to come in,' I says, pulling at it.

"'There ain't nothing of the sort,' says mother shortly, and goes on putting out the tea. 'Let the door alone.'

"'Yes, there is,' I says. 'It's a dog. It's Nip, or Juno,' meaning the brace of pointers that dad had usually in the kennels outside.

"Then mother, thinking that perhaps dad had found that one of the dogs could be spared after all, and had told it to go home, went to the door and opened it. I had been right and wrong too, for on the doorstep there was standing a large black dog.

"My word! but he was a beautiful creature, sir, the finest dog I ever set eyes on. Like a setter in the make of him, but no setter that ever I saw could match him in size or looks. His coat was jet-black, as glossy as the skin of a thoroughbred, with just one streak of white showing down the breast, and his eyes—well, they were the very humanest, sir, that ever I see looking out of a dog's face.

"Now mother, although she had expected to find a dog outside, hadn't dreamt of anything except one of ourn, and she made like to shut the door on him. But the creature was too quick for her. He had pushed his head through before she knew it, and she scarcely saw how, or even felt the door press against her before he had slipped past and was in the room.



"Mother was used to dogs, and hadn't no fear of them, but she didn't altogether like strange ones, you see, sir, me being such a child and all; and her first thought was to put the creature out. So she pulled the door wide open and pointed to it, stamping her foot and saying, 'Be off! Go home.'

"It was all very well to say that, but the dog wouldn't go. Not a step would he budge, but only stood there, wagging his tail and looking at her with them beautiful eyes of his, as were the biggest and beautifulest and softest I ever see in dog before or since. She took up a stick then, but his eyes were that imploring that she hadn't the heart to use it; and at last, for the odd kind of uneasiness that had hung about her ever since dad had gone was on her still, and the dog was a dog and meant protection whatever else it might be, she shut the door, barred it across, and said to me that we would let it stop.

"I was delighted, of course, and wanted to make friends at once; but the queer thing was that the dog wouldn't let me touch him. He ran round under the table and lay down in a corner of the room, looking at me with his big soft eyes and wagging his tail, but never coming no nearer. Mother put down some water, and he lapped a little, but only sniffed at a bone she threw him and didn't touch it.

"It was quite dark by this time, and mother lit a candle and set it on the table to see to have tea by. Afterwards she took her knitting and sat down by the fire, and I leaned against her, nodding and half asleep. The dog lay in the corner furthest from us, between the fireplace and the wall; and I'd forgotten altogether about him, when mother looks up sudden. 'Bless me,' says she, 'how bright the fire do catch the wall to-night. I haven't dropped a spark over there, surely.' And up she gets and crosses over to t'other side to where the firelight was dancing and flickering on the cottage wall.

"Now, sir, whether it was no more than just the light catching them, mind you, I can't say. I only know that as mother come to the corner where that dog was a-lying, and he lifted his head and looked at her, his eyes were a shining with a queer lamping sort of light, that seemed to make the place bright all round him. But it wasn't till afterwards that she thought of it, for at that moment there came a sudden sharp knock at the door.

"My eye! how mother jumped; and I see her face turn white.



For in that lonely out-of-the-way place we never looked for visitors after dark, nor in the day time, many of 'em ; and the sound of this knock now give her quite a turn. Presently there come a faint voice from outside asking for a crust of bread.

"Mother didn't stir for a moment, for the notion of unbarring the door went against her. The knock came a second time.

"'For pity's sake—for the sake of the child,' the voice said again, pleading like.

"Now, mother was terrible soft-hearted, sir, whenever children were concerned, and the mention of a child went straight home to her heart. I see her glance at me, and I knowed the thought passing through her mind, as after a moment's pause she got up, stepped across the room and unbarred the door. On the step outside stood a woman with a baby in her arms.

"Her voice had sounded faint-like, but there was nothing in the fainting line about her when she had got inside, for she come inside quick enough the moment mother had unbarred the door. She looked like a gipsy, for her face was dark and swarthy, and the shawl round her head hid a'most all but the wild gleam of her eyes ; and all the time she kep' on rock, rocking that child in her arms until I reckon she must have rocked all the crying out of it, for never a word come from its lips. She sat down where mother pointed, and took the food she was given, but she offered nothing to the child. It was asleep, she said, when mother wanted to look at it.

"Yes, she was a gipsy, and on the tramp across the moor she had missed her way in the fog ; for there was a heavy fog coming up. 'How far was it to Farnington? Twelve miles? She'd be thankful to sit and rest by the fire a bit, then, if mother would let her.' And without waiting for yes or no, she turned round and put the child out of her arms down on the settle at her back. Then she swung round again and sat staring with her black eyes at the fire. I was sat on my stool opposite, and child-like, I never so much as took my eyes off her, wondering at her gaunt make, the big feet in the clumsy men's boots that showed beneath her skirts, and the lean powerful hands lying in her lap. Seems she didn't altogether like me watching her, for after a bit she turns on me and asks :

"'What are you staring at, you brat?'

"'Nothin,' says I.

“‘Then if you wants to look at nothin,’ says she with a short laugh, ‘you can go and starc at the kiddy there, not at me.’ And she jerked her head towards the settle, where the baby was a-lying.

“‘Ah, poor little thing,’ says mother, getting up, ‘it don’t seem natural for it to lie there that quiet. I’ll bring it to the fire and warm it a drop o’ milk.’

“She bent down over the baby and was just about to take it in her arms, when she give a scream that startled me off my stool, and stood up, her face as white as death. For it was nothing but a shawl or two rolled round something stiff and heavy as was lying on the settle, and no child at all.

“I was a-looking at mother, and I had no eyes for the woman until I see mother’s face change and an awful look of fear come over it. And when I turned to see what she was staring at with them wild eyes, the woman had flung off her shawl and the wrap she wore round her head, and was stood up with a horrid, mocking smile on his face. For it was no woman, sir, as you’ll have guessed, but a man.

“‘Well, mistress,’ he says, coming forward a pace or two, ‘I didn’t mean to let the cat out of the bag so soon ; but what’s done’s done. There’s a little trifle of rent money put by for the agent, as I’ve taken a fancy to ; and that’s what’s brought me here. If you hand it over quietly, so much the better for you ; if not . . . I’m not one to stick at trifles ; I’ve come for that money, and have it I will.’

“‘I have not got it,’ mother said, plucking up what heart she could, and speaking through her white and trembling lips.

“‘That don’t go down with me,’ said the fellow with an oath. ‘I didn’t sleep under the lee of Tom Regan’s hayrick for nothin’ last night, and I heard every word that was spoken between him and your Jim. You’d better tell me where you’ve got it stowed, or you’ll be sorry for it. You’re a woman, mind you, and alone.’

“Mother’s lips went whiter than ever, but she said never a word. I had begun to cry.

“‘Hold your row, you snivelling brat,’ the fellow said with a curse. ‘Come, mistress, you’d best not try my patience too long.’

“Now, mother was a brave woman, as I’ve said, and I don’t believe, if the money had been left in her charge, as she’d have

given it up tamely and without so much as a word. But of course, as things were, she could do no more than say, over and over again, as she hadn't got it. Then the brute began to threaten her, with threats that made her blood run cold ; for she was only a woman, sir, and alone, except for me, a child as could do nothing in the way of help. With a last horrid threat on his lips the fellow turned towards the settle—there was a pistol hid in the clothes of the sham baby we found out afterwards—when he was stopped by something as come soft and noiseless out of the corner beyond and got right in his way. I see what it was after a minute. Between him and the settle where the pistol was lying there was standing that dog.

“The creature had showed neither sight nor sound of itself since the woman had come in, and we'd forgotten about it altogether, mother and me. There it stood now, though, still as a stone, but all on the watch, the lips drawn back from the sharp white teeth, and its eyes fixed, with a savage gleam in them, on the fellow's face. I was nothing but a child, and no thought of anything beyond had come to me then ; but I tell you, sir, child as I was, I couldn't help feeling that the grin on the creature's face had something more than dog-like in it ; and for nights to come I couldn't get the thought of it out of my head.

“Our visitor looked a bit took aback when he saw the creature, for most of his sort are terrible feared of a dog. But 'twas only for a moment, and then he laughed right out.

“‘He's an ugly customer, but he won't help you much, mistress,’ he said with a sneer. ‘I've something here as'll settle *him* fast enough.’ With that he stretched out his hand towards the bundle on the settle.

“The hand never reached it, sir. You know the choking, worrying snarl a dog gives before he springs to grip his enemy by the throat, the growl that means a movement—and death ! That sound stopped the scoundrel, and kept him, not daring to stir hand or foot, with the dog in front of him, never moving, never uttering a sound beyond that low threatening growl, but watching, only watching. He might have been armed with a dozen weapons, and it would have been all the same. Those sharp, bared fangs would have met in his throat before he could have gripped the pistol lying close to him ; and he knew it, and the knowing of it kept him there still as a

stone, with the dog never taking its watching, burning eyes from his face.

“ ‘I’m done,’ he owned at last, when minutes that seemed like hours had gone by. ‘I’m done this time, mistress, thanks to the dog-fiend you’ve got here. I tell you I’d not have stopped at murder when I come in ; but that kid of yours could best me now. Make the devil brute take his eyes off me, and let me go.’

“All trembling, like a leaf, mother got to the door and drew back the bar. The fellow crossed the kitchen and slunk out, and the dog went with him. It followed him with its nose close at his knee as he crossed the threshold, and the two of them went like that, out into the fog and over the lonely moorland into the night. We never saw nor heard of the dog again.

“There were gipsies in the neighbourhood, crossing the moor out Wharton way, and when the story got about folk told us as ’twas known they had some strange-looking dogs with them, and said that this one must have belonged to the lot. But mother, she never believed in nothin’ of the sort, and to the day of her death she would have it as the creature had been sent to guard her and me from the danger that was to come to us that night. She held that it was something more than a dog, sir, and you see there was one thing about it uncommon strange. When dad come back that next morning, our two pointers, Nip and Juno, followed him into the cottage. But the moment they got inside a sort of turn came over them, and they rushed out all queer and scared ; while as for the water mother had set down for the black dog to drink, there was no getting them to put their lips to it. Not thirsty, sir ? Well, sir, seeing as there warn’t no water within six mile or so, and they’d come ten miles that morning over the moor, you’ll excuse me saying you don’t know much about dogs if you reckon they warn’t thirsty.

“Coincidence you say, sir ? Well, I dunno the meaning of that—maybe it’s a word you gentles gives to the things you can’t explain. But I’ve told you the story just as it happened, and I’d swear it’s true anyhow. If a gentleman like you can’t see daylight in it, t’aint for the likes of me to try ; but I sticks to it that, say what folks will, the thing was uncommon strange. . . . Not tried the west side, haven’t you, sir ? Bless your heart, Ben, what be you a-thinking of ? The birds are as thick as blackberries down by the Grey Rock and Deadman’s Hollow.”

"That's a gruesome name," I said, rising and lifting my gun while Ben coupled up the brace of dogs. I noticed a glance exchanged between father and son as the younger man lifted his head.

"Yes, sir," responded the former quietly ; "the morning after that night I've been telling you of, the body of a man was found down there, and that's how the hollow got its name. Mother, she knew him again the moment she set eyes on the dead face, for all he'd got quit of the woman's clothes ; and there warn't no mark nor wound on him, to show how he'd come by his death. Oh, yes, sir ; I ain't saying as the fog warn't thick that night, nor as how it wouldn't have been easy enough for him to ha' missed his footing in the dark ; though to be sure there were folks as would have it 'twarn't *that* as killed him. . . . Good-day to you, sir, and thank you kindly. Ben here'll see to your having good sport."

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It was vexing to find so much gross superstition still extant in this last decade of the nineteenth century, certainly. Yet for all that, and though the notion of a spook dog was something too much for the materialistic mind to swallow, there is no use denying that, as I stood an hour later in Deadman's Hollow, with the recollection of the weird story I had just heard fresh in my memory, I was conscious of a cold shiver, which all the strength of the August sunshine, bathing the moorland in a glow of gold, was quite unable to lessen or to drive away.

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# Wolf-Madness

(LYCANTHROPY.)

By A. M. JUDD.

## PART I.

By Wolf-madness is meant, not hydrophobia, which occasionally attacks wolves as well as other animals, but that far more terrible malady, which, in almost all nations, and in all ages, afflicted men and made them fancy themselves wolves, and act as such.

Half the world believed that certain persons had the power of changing themselves into beasts, and indeed the superstition is not wholly extinct in the present day. In parts of France the peasants still firmly believe in the *loups-garoux*, and will not pass their haunts after nightfall.

Wehr-wolves were called by different names in different places. The French called them *loups-garoux*; the Bretons, *Bisclaveret*; in Normandy they were designated garwolves, and they were known in the Perigord as *loulérous*. With regard to these latter, bastards were supposed to be obliged at each full moon to transform themselves into these beasts, and in the form of *loulérous* to pass the night ranging over the country, biting and devouring any animals, but more especially dogs, they might meet. Sometimes they were made ill in consequence of having eaten tough old hounds, and vomited up their undigested paws.

The belief in wehr-wolves has come down from the earliest times, from ancient mythology and classic fable. Ovid tells the story of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, who, to test the omniscience of Jupiter, served up for him a dish of human flesh, and was promptly punished by the god for his insolence, by being transformed into a wolf.

That there was a wide-spread superstition of lycanthropy, or wolf-madness, is undoubted, and the belief in a creature combining human intelligence with wolfish ferocity and demoniac strength, was especially strong and prevalent in the middle ages. To this day the idea is still cherished by peasants in remote and secluded parts of Europe.

There was a basis of truth on which the wehr-wolf superstition

rested. The old Norse freebooters were celebrated for the murderous frenzy, "Berseker rage," which possessed them at times. The craving for blood and rapine, stimulated by their ravages in summer climes, was developed at home into a strange homicidal madness. When the fit was on them, they would go forth at night, dressed in the skins of wolves and bears, and crush the skulls, or cleave the backbones of any unfortunate belated traveller they might meet, whose blood they sometimes drank. In their frenzied excitement, they acquired superhuman strength and insensibility to pain, and, as they rushed about with glaring eyeballs, gnashing their teeth, foaming at the mouth, and howling like wild beasts, it is not strange that the terrified peasantry should have regarded them as veritable wehr-wolves. Great exhaustion and nervous depression followed these attacks. According to the Norse historians this "Berseker rage" was extinguished by baptism.

The belief in these transformations in the middle ages derived a new and terrible significance from its connection with witchcraft. The ancients regarded the subjects of metamorphoses with superstitious reverence. Divine natures were believed to assume earthly forms, and human beings were supposed to assume, after death, the shapes of those animals their natures most resembled, but these mythological conceptions were degraded by the mediæval christians, into diabolical influences. The Church, jealous of miraculous powers exercised beyond its pale, denounced the wehr-wolf as a devil. Thus a person suspected of beast metamorphosis ran the double risk of losing both his soul and his life, of being anathematized by the clergy, and then burnt at the stake. Ignorance of the phenomena of mental disease led to a belief that its victims were ministers of the Evil One, and even mere eccentricity was often fatal to its unfortunate possessor. These ideas were strengthened by some terrible instances of homicidal insanity, occasionally accompanied by cannibalism and lycanthropic hallucinations which were often ascribed to demoniac agency.

The saints were believed to have a power similar to that of the demons. Vereticus, king of Wales, was said to have been transformed into a wolf by St. Patrick, and another saint doomed the members of an illustrious family in Ireland to become wolves for seven years, prowling among the bogs and forests, uttering mournful howls, and devouring the peasants' sheep to allay their hunger.



Though imprisoned in a lupine form, the unfortunate victims were believed to retain their human consciousness, and in some cases their voices, and to yearn for an alleviation of their condition.

The superstitious belief in lycanthropy is of very remote antiquity and its origin is involved in much obscurity. It pervaded Greece, Rome, Germany and other nations; even in England it was prevalent in the middle ages, and was supposed to have come down from the Chaldeans and other nomadic people, who had unceasingly to defend their flocks from the attacks of wolves. The terror that those ferocious beasts spread by prowling at night round the folds proved favourable to malefactors, who, assuming the guise of furious wolves, were the better enabled to perpetrate acts of theft or vengeance.

This lycanthropy was a disease, and a very terrible one. The victims of the hallucination that they were wehr-wolves were undoubted madmen who fully believed they were able to transform themselves into wolves. At the present day some of the inmates of lunatic asylums fancy they can turn themselves at will into beasts, and howl and gnash their teeth in decided wolfish fashion.

Sometimes the wehr-wolves were satisfied with rending and tearing sheep and drinking their blood, but in others this insane appetite took the still more horrible form of cannibalism. Animal flesh would not satisfy their dreadful cravings; human beings, generally children, falling victims to this frightfully depraved taste.

There is another revolting phase that this madness took. Occasionally persons were transformed into human hyenas. Their craving was not, as was that of lycanthropists, for fresh, warm human flesh, they preferred their tit-bits to have been kept some time, as game is hung in order to make it tender; in other words these hyena victims of the terrible malady preferred to dig the corpses out of the graveyards. They were seized with an irresistible desire to enter cemeteries and rifle the newly-made graves so that they might enjoy their gruesome repast.

Strangely enough, these human ghouls were sometimes found in the ranks of the upper classes, unlike the majority of those who killed their victims; these latter being, for the greater part, composed of the most poverty-stricken, ignorant and degraded, of a very low type of intellectual and moral development.

So lately as 1849, one of these ghouls was discovered in Paris. He was a French officer named Bertrand. Delicate and refined in

appearance, he was beloved by his comrades for his generous and cheerful qualities. He was, however, of retiring habits, and occasionally subject to fits of depression; but no one had any idea of his ghoulish propensities till they were brought to light.

In the autumn of 1848 several of the cemeteries in the neighbourhood of Paris were found to have been entered during the night, and some of the graves rifled.

It was at first supposed that wild beasts were the perpetrators of these outrages; but footprints in the soft earth showed that it was a man.

Close watch was kept in Père la Chaise, and the outrages there ceased. But in the following winter other cemeteries were ravaged.

It was not until the March of 1849 that the depredator was discovered by means of a spring gun, which had been set in the cemetery of St. Parnasse. One night it went off, and the watchers rushed to the spot, just in time to see a dark figure in a military cloak leap over the wall and disappear in the darkness, but not without leaving traces behind; there were marks of blood and a fragment of blue cloth, and these were the means of bringing the guilt home to Bertrand.

He was an officer in the 1st Infantry regiment; and when he was cured of his wound, he was tried by court-martial, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. He said that the madness suddenly came upon him one day when, walking in a cemetery, he saw a grave not yet filled in, and a spade near at hand. He soon dragged the corpse out and hacked it about with the spade. After this he visited the cemeteries at night, and dug up various corpses, principally women and little girls, and mutilated them in a horrible manner, some he chopped up with the spade, others he ripped and tore with his teeth and nails, rending the flesh from the bones. Sometimes he tore the mouth open, and rent the face back to the ears; he opened the stomachs, pulled off the limbs, and scattering the pieces around, rolled among the fragments. He used to dig up the bodies of men also, but never felt any inclination to mutilate them; it was female corpses he used to delight in rending.

It was excess in drinking that first brought on this horrible madness, and after these accesses of diabolical ghouliness he would fall into fits of utter exhaustion and helplessness, when, after crawling to some place of concealment he would lie prone on the ground

for hours, no matter what the weather might be, unable to stir or rise. It is not stated whether he went on with his ghoul's work after he was liberated from the year's imprisonment to which he was sentenced.

Bertrand's case shows how the brute still underlies the polish of civilization. He was not accounted mad, yet these fits of cannibalism must have been due to some form of insanity, and he seemed totally unable to control his dreadful appetite.

Somehow, much more horrible interest appears to centre on these nineteenth-century miscreants, such as Bertrand and Swiatek, than on those of former and remoter ages. There might have been exaggeration and mis-statements about the ancient men-beasts, but there could be none about their modern prototypes.

Ghouls and vampires have some connection with lycanthropists, for they were supposed in the daytime to be able to turn themselves into wolves or hyenas, while on moonlight nights they would steal among the tombs, and burrowing into them with their long nails, they disinterred the bodies of the dead ere the first streak of dawn compelled them to retire from their unhallowed feast.

To such an extent did the fear of ghouls extend in Brittany, that it was customary to keep lamps burning during the night in churchyards, so that the witches might be deterred from venturing, under cover of darkness, to violate the graves. It was supposed that troops of female ghouls used to appear upon battlefields unearthing the hastily buried bodies of the soldiers and devouring the flesh off their bones.

That the belief in vampires is not extinct in the present day, the following, which appeared in the *Standard* of May 11th, 1893, will show. "Eleven peasants in the Polish village of Muszina, in Galicia, actuated by a superstition that the recent frosts were the work of a vampire which had entered into an old man who had lately been buried, opened the grave, beheaded the body, and pierced the heart with a stake. They were all arrested."

There was a very ghastly idea in Normandy, that the *loup-garou* was sometimes a metamorphosis forced upon the body of a damned person, who, after being tormented in his grave, worked his way out of it. It was supposed that he first devoured the cerecloth which enveloped his face, then his moans and muffled howls rang from the tomb through the gloom of night, the earth of the grave began to

## A Queer Picture.

By JAMES STEEL.

MANY years ago I was an unwilling participator in one of those curious experiences called "second sight," which are sometimes met with in fiction, but seldom encountered, as in the present instance, in real life.

I had been staying for a few days with some old friends down in the country, far away from the noise and smoke of London. My last evening at Beech Hall had arrived, and my host and I were indulging in "that small cigar" before moving to the drawing-room, when my eye fell on a picture hanging above the sideboard, which in an instant held me spellbound.

I had often laughingly declared Beech Hall to be the nicest old curiosity shop I had ever been in, and pictures were my host's chief hobby. I am a painter by profession, myself; but the finest landscape I had ever seen in Europe, or, for the matter of that, anywhere else, fell short of the marvellous creation I was now gazing upon.

Presently I became aware that my friend was speaking to me, so with an effort, withdrawing my eyes from the canvas on the wall, I exclaimed: "Williams, who on earth painted that view, and where did you get it?"

"What view?" he rejoined, sharply. "Where do you mean?"

"Why there," I replied, pointing to the place where, a moment before, I had seen the wonderful picture. But now, to my astonished gaze the wall only presented a blank space.

I blinked my eyes, and looked again; then left my chair, and walking across the room, closely examined the place where the picture had been, but not the slightest trace could be found of what I was in search of.

"There is not the slightest doubt about it," I exclaimed to Williams, who now advanced to my side, as if he too expected to see something. "I tell you," I went on, "I saw a painting hanging up there a minute ago, which for wonderful execution surpasses anything I believed to be possible in my wildest dreams. Imagine an empty frame, and that you are looking through it at a real landscape

bat, he will devour Odin ; not content with this, he will devour the sun, but will in his turn, be killed by Vidar.

There are also two wolves, one of which pursues the sun, and the other the moon, and one day both these orbs will be caught and devoured by them ; probably one of these is confounded with Fenris, for two wolves would scarcely devour one sun, unless they divided it in halves.

Of the origin of these wolves the Edda tells that "a hag dwells in a wood to the east of Midgard, this is called J'arnvid, or the Iron Wood, and is the abode of a race of witches called J'arnvidjur.

This old hag is the mother of many gigantic sons, who are all of them wolf-shaped. The most formidable of these is named Mánagarm; he will be filled with the life-blood of men who draw near their end, and will swallow up the moon, and stain the heavens and the earth with blood. Then shall the sun grow dim (preparatory to being devoured) and the winds howl tumultuously to and fro. The snow will fall from the four corners of the world. The stars will vanish from the heavens. The tottering mountains will crumble to pieces ; the sea will rush upon the land ; and the great serpent, advancing to the shore will inundate the air and water with floods of venom. Then will follow "the twilight of the Gods"—the end of the world.

It may not be out of place here to mention that that apocryphal monster, the dragon, was by many affirmed to be the offspring of an eagle and a she-wolf. An old writer declared that "the dragon had the beake and wings of an eagle, a serpente's taile, the feete of a wolfe, and a skin speckled and partie-coloured like a serpente." He adds the following extraordinary statement, "Neither can it *open the eyelids*, and it liveth in caves."

Olaus Magnus, Archbishop of Upsal, and Metropolitan of Sweden in the sixteenth century, wrote a great deal on the subject of wehr-wolves. He relates, that in the northern parts, at Christmas, there is a great gathering of these men-wolves, who, during the night, rage with such fierceness against mankind, for they are much more savage than natural wolves, that the inhabitants suffer infinite miseries. They attack houses, break open doors, destroy the inmates, and going to the cellars, drink amazing quantities of ale and mead, leaving the empty barrels heaped one on another. Somewhere in those wild northern regions, there was once a wall, belonging to a castle which had been destroyed ; and here the wehr-wolves were



wont to assemble at a given time and exercise themselves in trying to leap over the wall. The fat ones that could not succeed were flogged by their captains. Olaus asserts that great men and members of the chief nobility of the land belonged to this singular confraternity. The change was effected by mumbling certain words and drinking a cup of ale to a man-wolf. It was necessary that the transformation should take place in some secret cellar or private wood, and the wehr-wolves could change to and fro as often as they pleased. It was not always, however, that the man-wolf could change his shape in time to save his life.

There is a story told of a Russian Archduke, who seized a sorcerer, named Lycaon (perhaps a descendant of the Arcadian king), and commanded him to change himself into a wolf. The enchanter obeyed; not thinking of treachery, he crouched down, muttering incantations, and straightway became a wolf, with glaring eyes, grinning jaws, and raging so fearfully that the keepers could scarcely hold him. By way of having a little sport, the Archduke set two ferocious hounds upon him, and the unfortunate Lycaon was torn to pieces before he could resume his human form.

Some of the lycanthropists felt no uneasiness during the change, but others were afflicted with great pain and horror, while the hair was breaking out of their skin even before they were thoroughly changed.

Some could change themselves whenever they wished, others were transformed twice a year, at Christmas and Midsummer, at which times they grew savage, and were seized with a desire to converse with wolves in the woods. Many of these wehr-wolves bore marks of wounds and scars on their faces and bodies which had been inflicted on them by dogs or men when in their lupine form.

Wehr-wolves were distinguished from natural wolves by having no tails, and by their eyes; for these latter never changed, they were always human. The salve, which in some places was supposed to work the change, was composed of gruesome ingredients, in which the fat of newly-born strangled infants, the marrow of malefactors collected at the foot of the gibbet, the blood of bats, toads and owls, the grease of sows, wolves and weasels, mixed with belladonna, aconite, parsley, poppy, hemlock, combined with various other noxious ingredients, and must have formed a delectable compound.

That lycanthropy was known as a disease is evident, from some

of the old writers speaking of it : " The infected," says one of them, " imitate wolves, and think themselves such, leaping out of their beds and running wild about the fields at night, worrying the flocks, and snarling like a dog. They lurk about the sepulchres by day with pale looks, hollow eyes, thirsty tongues, and exulcerated bodies. They have a black, ugly and fearful look."

It is supposed that Nebuchadnezzar was attacked with this kind of madness when he grovelled about on all fours and ate grass like the beasts.

So late as the reign of James the First, an Englishman, Bishop Hall, travelling in Germany, related that he went through a certain wood that was haunted, not only by freebooters, but by wolves and witches (although these last are oft-times but one). He saw there a boy, half of whose face had been devoured by a witch-wolf, yet so as that the ear was rather cut than bitten off.

At Limburgh the Bishop saw one of these creatures executed; the wretched woman was put on the wheel, and confessed in her tortures that she had devoured two-and-forty children in her wolf-form.

Other authorities state that wehr-wolves were always at enmity with witches. There is a tale told of a countryman who put up at the house of a jovial bailiff, drank too much, and was left to have his sleep out on the floor. The next morning, a horse was found dead in the paddock, cut in two with a scythe. In answer to questions, the guest admitted that he was a wehr-wolf, and that he had hunted a witch about the field. She had taken refuge under the horse, and in aiming at her he had unintentionally divided the animal in halves.

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## PART II.

MANY are the stories related of wehr-wolves; but they differ somewhat according to the locality from which they come. Thus, there are many versions of the following.

A nobleman was travelling with his retainers; and one night they found themselves in a thick wood, far from all human habitations. They were hungry, for they had no provisions with them and did not know what to do. One of the servants, however, told them not to be surprised at anything that might happen. He then went into



a dark part of the forest, and presently a wolf was seen to run past, and soon came back with a sheep it had slain, which the company were very grateful for. Then the wolf went to the dark spot, and the servant emerged from there in his proper shape. He was a wehr-wolf.

Another account says that it was a slave who turned himself into a wolf, but unfortunately the dogs set upon him and tore out one of his eyes, so that afterwards he was blind of one eye.

Again, a tale says it was a gentleman who transformed himself because a lady wished to see the change, and lost his eye in consequence.

There are numerous instances of wolves having been wounded, and the next day human beings being found wounded in exactly the same place, thus clearly demonstrating the fact that they were wehr-wolves.

In one case a nobleman had a beautiful wife; whether he had tired of her is not stated, but the sequel looks like it, and that he took this means of getting rid of her. A friend came to stay at the castle, who went out hunting. On his return he informed the nobleman that a huge wolf had attacked him, but that he had succeeded in cutting off one of its forepaws which he brought home with him. On taking it out of the cloth in which he had wrapped it, he was horrified to see, not a wolf's paw, but a delicate white hand, having jewels on the fingers. The nobleman instantly recognised the rings as his wife's. Going to her room he found her looking very ill and carefully keeping her right hand covered up. Insisting on seeing it, he soon discovered the bleeding wrist, and knew for certain that his wife was a wehr-wolf. This unfortunate lady was tried and executed, falling a victim to her husband's dislike.

In one version, a man going home in the dark was attacked by a wolf, but managed to cut off a paw, which, on reaching his house, he found was a human hand. In a day or two he discovered that a young man of his acquaintance had lost his right hand that very night, which was proof-positive that he was the wehr-wolf who had attacked him.

There is a story related that a nobleman travelling with his servants in some part of France came upon an old beggar-man who was toiling along under a heavy wallet. One of the servants good naturedly offered to carry it, an offer which was accepted. The man felt

curious to know what was in the bag, and opening it saw a wolf skin. A desire to put it on came over him, and doing so, he was instantly transformed into a wolf, and rushed about snarling and howling, and trying to attack everyone near him. The dogs had to be set on him, and he only succeeded in getting out of the wolf skin with his life, having received several wounds from the dogs. This man averred that the nature of a wolf seemed to come upon him with its skin, and he had a desire to rend anyone he could seize. Of course they looked at once for the original owner of the skin, the beggar, but the old loup-garou had disappeared and never came to claim his property.

In different countries these metamorphoses were effected by different means. A Swedish tradition relates that a cottager named Lasse, having gone into the forest to fell a tree, neglected to cross himself and say his Paternoster. By this neglect a troll was enabled to change him into a wolf. His wife, who mourned his loss for many years, was told by a beggar-woman, to whom she had been kind, that she would see her husband again as he was not dead, but roaming the forest as a wolf. That very evening, as she was in her pantry putting away a joint of meat, a wolf put its paws on the window-sill, and looked sorrowfully at her. "Ah!" said she, "if I knew that thou wert my husband, I would give thee this meat." At that instant the wolf skin fell off, and her husband stood before her in the same old clothes which he had on on the day of his disappearance.

In parts of Germany, those who wished to become wehr-wolves, obtained the power by drinking a nauseous draught from the hands of one already initiated.

In France, usually, the change was made by rubbing with some unguent, generally of demoniacal origin. Others asserted that wolf skins given them by devils, had the quality of transforming those who put them on into ferocious animals themselves.

Mostly the loup-garou was able to re-transform himself back into his human shape at his own will by such expedients as plunging into water, rolling over and over in the dew, or resuming his clothes, which were usually hidden in some thicket while the wehr-wolves were on their runs; but there were cases where the victims were unable to escape from their lupine form for periods ranging from a month to seven years. These were generally victims of the hatred

of relatives who took this method of punishing those who were obnoxious to them.

It was said that jilted mistresses and deserted wives used to bribe witches to turn their faithless swains or husbands into wolves for the term of seven years. These wolves, however, were not credited with a taste for human flesh.

Some of those who were executed as lycanthropists, declared in their confessions, that no sooner had they put on the wolf-skin received from a demon, than their whole nature seemed to change. Their teeth felt on edge to bite and rend, the bloodthirst awoke in them, and they would dart forth from hut or brake or thicket, wherever, in fact, the metamorphoses had taken place, and traverse meadows, forests, plains and marshes, howling in a frightful manner until they met a victim, when they would rend him with teeth and claws, preparatory to making a meal of him. In great fear were these wehr-wolves held, and terrible tales were told of them and the bloody scenes and unhallowed deeds that were supposed to be enacted in their nocturnal haunts.

Real wolves in severe winters have been known to come into villages and kill children, and cases have been heard of, when terribly pressed by hunger, their invading burial grounds, and disinterring the dead, and occasionally, perhaps, their depredations have been put down wrongfully to some unfortunate being suspected of being a loup-garou; but unfortunately there was only too much truth in the stories told of some of these human wolves and their propensities for cannibalism.

These insane creatures actually believed that they turned into wolves, though no trustworthy person had ever seen the transformation. Some of them ran about on all-fours, and devoured with eagerness any offal that came in their way.

As with witchcraft, so with lycanthropy.

When the persecution against wehr-wolves was disconnected and fitful, isolated cases only were heard of; but when, towards the end of the sixteenth century, something like a crusade was preached, and priestly anathemas were hurled against it, lycanthropy alarmingly increased. Nothing else being talked about, hundreds of weak heads were turned, silly persons accused themselves of the crime and attempted to play wolf, though somehow or other they could never manage the transformation to the satisfaction of their neighbours.

Not to be done however, some of them got over this difficulty by asserting that they *wore their bristles inside their skin*.

The folly and ignorance of our ancestors in those days must have been prodigious. Look at the scientific treatises they wrote to prove witchcraft true, and now this palpable lie took in these same learned persons, and a very animated discussion ensued upon the why and the wherefore of this extraordinary fact. The *savants*, with their usual discernment propounded a great many ingenious theories to account for so remarkable a circumstance, theories which satisfied everybody, except those who had counter-theories of their own. It must have been an edifying sight, these grave and reverend *seignors*, explaining to their own and everybody else's satisfaction how it was that the bristles of the invisible wolf-pelts could be worn under the human skin.

In 1598, a tailor of Chalons was sentenced to be burned alive for lycanthropy. He used to decoy children into his shop, or waylay them in the woods at dusk. After tearing them with his teeth and killing them, he dressed their flesh like ordinary meat, and devoured it with great relish. A cask full of bones was found in his house, but the number of his victims is unknown.

Peter Bourgot, a shepherd of Besançon, having lost his sheep in a storm, recovered them by the aid of the devil, whom he agreed to serve, and was transformed into a wolf by being smeared with a salve. He confessed that he had often killed and eaten children and even grown persons. On one of his raids, a boy whom he attacked screamed so loudly that he was obliged to return to his clothes, and smear himself again in order to escape detection.

One Roulet was a wretched beggar, whose idiotic mind was completely mastered by his cannibal appetite. The first knowledge of his depraved taste was obtained by some countrymen, who, while passing a wild and lonely spot near Caude, found the mutilated corpse of a boy of fifteen. On their approach, two wolves which had been rending the body ran off. Following their tracks, the men came upon a half-naked man crouching in the bushes. His hair and beard were long and straggling, and his nails, which were the length of claws, were clotted with blood and shreds of human flesh. Roulet acknowledged that he had killed the boy, and would have devoured the body completely had it not been for the arrival of the men. He said, at his trial, that he transformed himself into a wolf by

using an ointment his parents had given him ; and added, that the wolves that had been seen leaving the corpse were his brother and cousin. There is no doubt this man killed and eat several children, under the belief that he was a wolf. He was sentenced to death, but afterwards placed in a madhouse.

Another lycanthropist, Jacques Raollet, was a native of Maumusson, near Nantes. His hair floated over his shoulders like a mane, his eyes were buried in his head, his brows knit, his nails excessively long, and he smelt so strong that nobody cared to go near him. This wehr-wolf had a propensity for which a good many persons, instead of finding fault with him, would applaud him in the present day ; he confessed that it was a frequent custom of his to devour lawyers, bailiffs and others of the same sort, though he avowed that their flesh was so tough that he could never digest it.

Raollet was captured by the aid of dogs. During his examination he asked a gentleman who was present if he did not remember once to have discharged his arquebuss at three wolves.

The gentleman, a noted sportsman, admitted that he had done so, upon which Raollet declared that he was one of those wolves, and if they had not been put to flight by the peppering they had received on that occasion they would have devoured a woman who was working in a field close by. He was condemned to death by the Parliament of Angers and was burned at the stake.

Though wolves were the principal animals into which men were supposed to be transformed, there were stories of other metamorphoses into bears, cats and hares. According to one tale a man was cleaving wood in his courtyard, when he was suddenly attacked by three very large and ferocious cats. He defended himself by his prayers and his axe, and finally drove off the animals, who were considerably the worse for the combat. What was the man's astonishment shortly afterwards to be hauled before a magistrate on the charge of grievously wounding three honourable matrons. The ferocious cats were ladies of high rank, the affair was hushed up, and the man was dismissed under a strict injunction to secrecy on forfeit of his life.

In 1661, in Poland, in the forest of Lithuania, some huntsmen perceived a great many bears together, and in the midst of them two of small size, which exhibited some affinity to the human shape. Their curiosity excited, the men with considerable difficulty, for the



creature defended itself with its teeth and claws, managed to capture one of these small bears. It ran about on all fours, the skin and hair were white, the limbs well proportioned and strong, the visage fair and the eyes blue, but the creature could not speak, and its inclinations were altogether brutish. It appeared to be about nine years old. This bear-child was shown to the king and queen. It was christened by an archbishop in the name of Joseph Ursin, the Queen of Poland standing godmother, and the French Ambassador, godfather. Attempts were made to tame Joseph, but with not much success. He could not be taught to speak, though there was no apparent defect in his tongue; nor could he be induced to throw aside his fierceness, or to wear clothes or shoes, or anything on his head; however, he learned to walk upright on his feet and go where he was bidden. He liked raw flesh. Sometimes he would steal to the woods and there suck the sap from the trees after he had torn off the bark with his nails.

One day it was observed that he being in a wood when a bear had killed two men, that ferocious beast came to him, and instead of harming him, fondled him and licked his face and body.

Whether this creature was really a human child stolen by bears in its infancy, is not stated, nor what eventually became of him.

There have been accounts too, but whether trustworthy or not, it is impossible to say, of baboons carrying off children and bringing them up with their own young, and these children grew up with all the characteristics of their baboon foster parents save that their skins were not hairy. When found and taken back to their rightful place among men, they pined, were miserable, and seized the first opportunity of returning to the haunts of the wild men of the woods whose natures seemed to be in affinity with their own.

It is also said that Romulus and Remus have had modern counterparts. A case occurred in Oude not many years ago.

This story is vouched for as being absolutely true. It was somewhere about 1840 that a child of eighteen months old was missed by its parents. It was supposed that wolves had devoured it. About seven years after a man shooting in the jungle saw a she-wolf with several cubs, one of these had the appearance of a boy running about on all fours. With considerable difficulty he captured it, for the she-wolf showed fight. The animal snarled and growled like a wolf, and tried to bite its captor. It was exhibited at Lucknow and

caused considerable sensation. It was eventually handed over to one of the authorities (an English officer) who had a cage made for it, as it was dangerous to let it loose. None doubted that it was a human being, though it never stood erect, or uttered any sound save a growl or hoarse bark. It would only eat raw flesh, and when clothes were made for it, it tore them to pieces. A rank wolfish smell issued from the pores of its skin, which was covered with thin short hair. Among the crowds who came to see the monster was the woman who had lost the child seven years before. To her horror she discovered by certain marks upon it that it was her own missing offspring. Every effort was made to tame him but without effect. He pined away and died in about a year after his capture.

In 1849 at the little hamlet of Polomyja, in Austrian Galicia, a white-bearded venerable man might have been seen sitting at the porch of a church asking alms of the poor wood-cutters who made up the population. This beggar, whose name was Swiatek, eked out his subsistence by the charity of the villagers and the sale of small pinchbeck ornaments and beads. Several children disappeared about this time, but nobody connected their disappearance with the venerable looking Swiatek, and as the wolves happened to be particularly ravenous that winter, it was supposed they had eaten them, and the exasperated villagers killed several. But a horrible discovery was made in the following May. An innkeeper lost two ducks and suspected Swiatek of being the thief. To satisfy himself he went to the beggar's cottage. The smell of roasted meat which greeted his nostrils when he entered confirmed his suspicions. As he threw open the door he saw the beggar hide something under his long robe. The innkeeper at once seized Swiatek by the throat and charged him with the theft, when, to his horror, he saw the head of a girl of fourteen drop from beneath the pauper's clothes.

He called the neighbours, and the old beggar, his wife, his daughter aged sixteen, and his son, aged five, were locked up. The hut was then thoroughly examined, and the mutilated remains of the poor girl were discovered, part being cooked. At his trial Swiatek stated that he and his family had eaten six persons. His children, however, declared that the number was much larger, and this testimony was confirmed by the discovery in the hut of fourteen different suits of clothes. For three years Swiatek had been indulging in this horrible propensity, which had suddenly sprung into existence



by the following circumstance :—In 1846 he found amid the charred ruins of a Jewish tavern, the half-roasted corpse of its proprietor, who had perished in the flames. The half-starved beggar could not resist the desire to taste it, and having done so, the unnatural craving impelled him to gratify his depraved appetite by murder. The indignation against him was so great that he would have been torn in pieces by the populace only he anticipated their vengeance by hanging himself the first night of his confinement from the bars of the prison-window.

There is a romantic Breton story of a nobleman who used to transform himself.

His wife discovered his secret, and possessed herself of his clothes while he was in the lupine state, thus preventing him from returning to his proper form. She then married a lover, and Bisclavaret lurked miserably in woods, longing in vain to shake off the brutish semblance that imprisoned him.

The king hunting one day pursued the man-wolf, and at last ran him down. He was about to kill the animal, when it seized his stirrup and appeared to implore his protection.

The king, greatly astonished, had him taken to court, where he became a great favourite, his manners were so gentle and dog-like.

But one day his faithless wife's husband came to court, when Bisclavaret jumped savagely upon him and nearly killed him before he could be rescued by the attendants. Again the same thing happened, but on the faithless dame herself appearing Bisclavaret seized upon her and tore her nose from her face.

This incensed the king greatly, and he would have put the wolf to death, when an aged counsellor perceiving some mystery, advised that the lady and the knight should be imprisoned until the truth should be extorted from them.

This was done and Bisclavaret's clothes being restored to him, he became a comely gentleman, who was taken into high favour. The wicked wife and her companion were banished from the land.

Instances might be multiplied by the score, but enough has been said to show that while wehr-wolves were a myth built up by superstition, Lycanthropy, or wolf-madness was no myth, but a dread and appalling reality.

## A Queer Picture.

By JAMES STEEL.

MANY years ago I was an unwilling participator in one of those curious experiences called "second sight," which are sometimes met with in fiction, but seldom encountered, as in the present instance, in real life.

I had been staying for a few days with some old friends down in the country, far away from the noise and smoke of London. My last evening at Beech Hall had arrived, and my host and I were indulging in "that small cigar" before moving to the drawing-room, when my eye fell on a picture hanging above the sideboard, which in an instant held me spellbound.

I had often laughingly declared Beech Hall to be the nicest old curiosity shop I had ever been in, and pictures were my host's chief hobby. I am a painter by profession, myself; but the finest landscape I had ever seen in Europe, or, for the matter of that, anywhere else, fell short of the marvellous creation I was now gazing upon.

Presently I became aware that my friend was speaking to me, so with an effort, withdrawing my eyes from the canvas on the wall, I exclaimed: "Williams, who on earth painted that view, and where did you get it?"

"What view?" he rejoined, sharply. "Where do you mean?"

"Why there," I replied, pointing to the place where, a moment before, I had seen the wonderful picture. But now, to my astonished gaze the wall only presented a blank space.

I blinked my eyes, and looked again; then left my chair, and walking across the room, closely examined the place where the picture had been, but not the slightest trace could be found of what I was in search of.

"There is not the slightest doubt about it," I exclaimed to Williams, who now advanced to my side, as if he too expected to see something. "I tell you," I went on, "I saw a painting hanging up there a minute ago, which for wonderful execution surpasses anything I believed to be possible in my wildest dreams. Imagine an empty frame, and that you are looking through it at a real landscape

beyond. In the foreground, part of a water-meadow, where grow merely the ordinary grasses and some kingcups, so perfectly done that they appear to be living plants which can be picked. Next is a river, with here and there a few round rushes by the near bank; while on the far side the break made upon its gliding surface by the rising of a trout is still visible as it swirls under a twisted alder stump. That is what I have just seen, and I half fancied I could hear the tinkle of the water-drops always accompanying the rise of a good trout when boldly on the feed. Then beyond the stream, which looked so absolutely liquid that I half expected it to rise and rush over the frame; away where the shadows deepened, under the trees of an old park, stood a half ruined sawmill, with what had once been a long two-storied cottage at the south end. The top half of the building, evidently designed as a timber loft, had a high doorway in the centre, and was wide open, exposing some of the rafters and a crossbeam supporting the roof." I ceased speaking, and my gaze reverted to the wall over the sideboard, for I was scarcely able to believe that the picture I had so lately and so clearly seen could so mysteriously have vanished.

For a few moments neither of us spoke, then Williams exclaimed:

"Nonsense, man, you've been working too hard lately on that new big picture of yours, and the healthiest brain when over-tired is liable to hallucinations. You should take things easier, old man, or you will be getting laid up. Come, let us have a 'white-wash,' and then join the ladies."

I noticed, however, that thus while making light of the whole matter, my friend was inwardly quite as much disturbed as myself, for he knew I was far too hard-headed and careful a man to make any statement without having good grounds for it. So it was with a mutual feeling of relief that we moved to the drawing room.

My hostess was an excellent musician, and I should have passed the rest of the evening agreeably enough, had I been able to dispossess my mind of what I had seen. But once I caught Williams furtively watching me over the corner of a piece of music, and I was glad when it was time to turn in.

After tossing about on my bed until nearly twelve o'clock, I was no nearer a solution of the difficulty, so I got up, slipped on my dressing-gown, and lighting my favourite briar, settled myself in a large chair in front of the grate for a good think. I did not trouble

to turn on the electric light with which my room, like every other in this comfortable house was fitted, for not only was there a very decent coal fire with a big log on the top just beginning to flicker into a blaze, but one blind was up and the moon shone out now and then from behind passing clouds, and lit up half the room with a soft radiant light.

I had just arrived at the conclusion that my host's theory about my being overworked was the only reasonable explanation of the problem, and that I had better put down my pipe and return to bed, when there came over me a curious and uncomfortable feeling that "something uncanny," as the Scotch say, was behind me. I felt annoyed and half ashamed at such a foolish idea, and instantly suppressed an involuntary desire to look over my shoulder. Then, irritably knocking my pipe out on the hob, I exclaimed aloud: "Williams, you are quite right, my boy; I am certainly over-doing it, and must take life more easily. I'll go to roost at once." And so I did, and settled myself comfortably between the sheets, heaving a quiet sigh of content at the thought of the refreshing repose I hoped soon to be enjoying. Little did I foresee that in ten minutes time there would be no more thoroughly scared man in existence than myself.

Presently, I began to feel drowsy, when the gas in a piece of coal burst into a bright spluttering flare. Lazily I opened my eyes, and saw before me on the wall the wonderful picture I have already tried to describe. Yes! surely the picture was the same, and yet—why did I not remember that figure of a fisherman in a soft wide-awake, on the bank of the river, with his back turned towards me? In the flickering firelight he appeared absolutely to move, as though in the act of making a cast over the trout, on the far side, beneath the alder bush.

Great Cæsar! he *was* moving! Fishing! I set my teeth, and glared across the room, trying to refute the evidence of my eyes. Then the flame of the fire went out, and in the dim light remaining, the objects in the picture became scarcely discernible. But what was that dark mass like a stump under the eaves of the broken-down sawmill?

Again the fire began flickering; I caught my breath and clenched my hands, for now for the first time in my life I was afraid. This was no stump or shadow. At the next moment I saw it move, and

made it out to be a second man, who had been crouching under the corner of the building. I was seized with an ugly presentiment of what was about to follow. I would have given all I was worth to have been anywhere else, except alone in the silent night in that old room, destined, I foresaw, to be the sole witness of the horrid scene I could feel coming, while I could not stir a limb.

Once in Africa, I had watched a great leopard sneaking through some rocky ground, after a small antelope, which was quietly feeding among some boulders, and here I was irresistibly reminded of the merciless brute stealing upon its prey, by the way in which the second shadowy figure, now before me, began creeping in upon the unconscious fisherman.

A cold perspiration broke out all over me, and I could feel my hair bristling upon my head. On, on crept the destroyer, while an overpowering horror held me numb.

Now, those treacherous feet were stealing soundlessly over the soft grass, where the golden king-cups grew behind the fisherman. At this moment a single streak of moonlight shone slantingly across the middle of the picture and gave me for half a second a clear view of this terrible being, whose image remained stamped on my brain for ever.

Every feature of that cruel evil face, from the mouth, like a steel trap, to those awful gleaming eyes, said "Murder!"

At that moment the coals in the fire gave way under the weight of the log upon them, and a large tongue of flame shot up on one side of the grate, shedding a ruddy glow all over the room.

Onward swept this human tiger, with head and shoulder now bent forward, as he gathered himself together for the spring.

There was a short swift rush: a life preserver swung up for one instant high in the air, and then descended on the defenceless head with a dull, heavy, sickening thud.

At that moment I believe I fainted. When I came to myself, and pulled my wits together again, the picture still hung on the wall; but the murderer and his victim were gone.

I soon made up my mind what to do. Hastily scrambling from my bed, I darted to my big box which contained one large tray at the top, for my paints, and a couple of spare canvasses. I quickly had one of them on my easel, for I meant to have a copy of that picture, if it would only wait, Ah, there was the rub! Would it wait?

Rapidly, with feverish eagerness I began to sketch in the outline. I had never worked so fast, and what was more surprising, so correctly. I felt as though some strong power were guiding me on, and colours I should never have combined, attracted the point of my brush, as the magnet would a needle, with such force that I could not help using them, though they were not those I myself should have employed.

Hour after hour flew by, and my copy grew under my fingers. My excitement increased, for each time I looked up, I feared to find the original had vanished. But it stayed with me, and dawn was breaking, as by the help of the electric light, I filled in the last minor details.

On comparing my work carefully with its strange original I felt with a thrill of satisfaction that at any rate I had produced a perfect copy of the greatest masterpiece I had ever seen.

True the murdered man, and his slayer had long since left the canvas, but they were so indelibly stamped upon my memory that I had no difficulty in filling them in.

First, the former in his soft wide-awake hat, with his back towards me : then the latter in the act of stealing across the strip of moonlight, his awful face and one shoulder standing out straight and clear, in the bright streak, which glittered across the picture like an avenging sword blade.

At this point a new idea crossed my mind. What if all this trouble and hard work were going to be superfluous? What if every night, for the rest of my natural life, I was destined to see that ghostly original hanging at the foot of my bed! Great heavens! the idea was insupportable. I looked up and received another shock: the queer picture was gone, and, as I afterwards found, gone for good. Feeling easier in my mind, I resumed my brush; gave a few final touches, and then leaning back in my chair, arrived at the satisfactory conclusion that I had really succeeded in producing the very counterpart of all that I had seen.

A knock at the door presently brought my heart into my mouth. The handle turned, and in walked Pantlin, the old butler, with my shaving water. If he felt surprise at my being up, and at my easel already, he did not show it. Merely remarking: "half-past eight, sir," he proceeded with his preparations for my morning toilet. I thought, however, that he must have noticed I looked



upset, for soon after his departure Williams himself came to my room.

No sooner did he catch sight of me than he exclaimed: "My dear fellow, what is the matter? You look as though you had seen a ghost!"

"I have seen a *murder*!" I said grimly, extending my finger to the easel where stood the result of the past night's work. I thought my old chum would have had a fit. His ruddy face blanched to the lips, and staggering towards the easel he fell on his knees before it, examining the details of my work. Rising after some time he exclaimed: "Yes! there's the inhuman fiend! My poor mother always suspected him.. Quick, Jack, quick," he went on with feverish impatience, "tell me all."

I soon gave him the particulars of the gruesome sight of which I had been the involuntary witness, and when I had finished my friend dropped into a chair.

"It is second sight," he said under his breath. "I see every detail now, clear as noonday. Listen to me, for I see that you are destined to be the means of exposing my poor father's murderer."

Williams thereupon told me that his parents had been secretly married: that his father had disappeared shortly afterwards, no one knew whither, and that his mother had been unable to prove her marriage, owing to the loss of certain papers believed to be stolen. The figure of the fisherman he assured me was undoubtedly that of his father, being the facsimile of a photograph in his possession; while the portrait of the murderer was that of Sir Richard Thorn-dyke, the present unlawful possessor of the title and the estates.

Little more remains to be told. Suffice it to say that my queer picture was the means of ultimately restoring to my old friend Williams the inheritance of which he had been so infamously cheated by the villain; who was in due time brought to justice, and executed.



**Ginevra.**Or "*LA VIA DEI MORTI.*"

(A FLORENTINE LEGEND).

By BARONESS SWIFT.

ON a dull autumn morning, in A.D. 1400, a dense crowd was gathered around the great *Duomo* of Florence. A double file of men-at-arms stood on guard at the entrance of the narrow street which lay to the south of the cathedral, while several sombre figures of monks, in sweeping robes, bearing lighted tapers and chanting solemn dirges, surrounded the aperture of a tomb, into which was about to be lowered a bier containing a shrouded corse, as was, at that epoch, the custom in Italy. In vain many of the boldest cavaliers attempted to penetrate the dense circle formed by the friars, in order to gaze, ere she for ever disappeared from their sight, on the fairest maiden of

Florence. But the marble stone, closing the sepulchre, rolled heavily back to its place ; the men-at-arms and monks withdrew, and the crowd began gradually to disperse. A few women alone remained on the spot, surrounding an elderly female, who, crouching on the cold marble pavement, was sobbing bitterly, but whom her friends finally succeeded in persuading to rise, in order to conduct her homewards.

"Is it, then, true that Madonna Ginevra died of a broken heart?" enquired one of the gossips, unable to restrain her curiosity any longer.

"Alack! 'tis true, indeed! Ah, those villains——"

"Hush, prithee! Do not speak so loudly."

"Why not? since that which I say is but the pure truth, and I will proclaim it as such, *coram populo!* They murdered her, the rascals! Who should know it better than myself? Was I not her foster-mother, and brought her up from infancy?"

The women had by this time reached the nurse's humble dwelling, and her inquisitive auditors lingered to listen to her recital, gathering eagerly round the rickety table, on which dimly flickered a four-wicked brazen oil-lamp.

"Assunta," she said, turning to one of the women near her, "dost remember the handsome young gallant thou didst point out to my notice last year? I was wont to attend high mass every Sunday at *Santa Maria Maggoire* with my beloved young lady, and thou wert, indeed, the first to remark how ardently he gazed on my innocent Ginevra, praying devoutly at my side, and thou saidst to me, 'What a handsome couple would those two young people form!' and I assented thereto. On issuing forth, I observed that yon cavalier stood awaiting us at the cathedral portal, and that he followed us to the Palazzo Amieri—my lady's home. And henceforward he pursued us like a shadow wheresoever we went. Finally, one evening, accosting me alone, he detained me to inform me of himself. He was named Messer Antonio Rondinelli, and, although at that epoch impoverished, his family was one of the noblest in Florence. His heart was filled with fair Ginevra's image, and he determined rather to renounce life itself than the hope of one day gaining the damsel's hand in marriage, although well aware of her father's pride and avarice. And thereupon he besought me to assist him in his endeavour to win her. Thereunto I hesitated to agree, knowing that

Messer Edoardo Amieri would never give his daughter to an impoverished youth, were he endowed with all the perfections of St. George himself. But, alas! Antonio Rondinelli described to me in such elegant terms the excess of his love for Ginevra, that I was fain to consent at last to bear a nosegay unto her, and speak fairly of him. Ye may, good friends, bethink you what resulted from this imprudent proceeding of mine. In a few days' time they grew ardently attached to one another, and exchanged, in much love and solace, vows of eternal devotion. Thereupon it was agreed between the lovers that a paternal relative of Antonio's should forthwith demand Madonna Ginevra's hand in marriage for the enamoured youth of old Amieri. We—my beloved young mistress and I,—stealthily peeping from her chamber lattice, beheld him enter the palace to this intent, and tremblingly awaited the result of his application. But hardly had a quarter of an hour elapsed, when Ginevra's chamber door was violently thrown open, and her father entered, with irate visage, purpled with the intensity of his emotions.

“‘Ginevra, within eight days hence thou wilt celebrate thy nuptials with Camillo Amati, who has demanded of me thy hand in wedlock,’ he said, with feigned calmness of tone, thereupon proceeding to retire.

“But Ginevra cast herself at his feet, clasping his knees, and imploring him rather to immure her in a convent for the rest of her life, if he would not consent to her union with the elected of her heart. It was a truly piteous sight to behold how the enraged old nobleman spurned the lovely damsel clinging to his knees, and supplicating his clemency. Overcome by pity for my young mistress, I, also, cast myself at his feet, uniting my prayers to hers; but, alas! the irate father thereupon poured on me the vials of his wrath.

“‘Infamous hag,’ he cried, ‘thou who wouldst have fain battered, for vile lucre, my innocent child's affections, unto the profit of yon pauper gallant's interests, get thee straightway gone, and if thou dost hazard to return hither, my hoands, I warrant thee, shall chase thee hence!’

“And, notwithstanding our ardent entreaties, he remained firm in his determination of thus summarily dismissing me, and while I went weeping forth from his palace, her hand-maidens bore the swooning Ginevra to her couch. What later transpired, I knew, subsequently, only from hearsay. Messer Amieri proved irremov-

ably resolute in his determination ; for what mattered to him his daughter's felicity if he could become father-in-law to the wealthiest nobleman in the city ? Vainly did the hapless damsel conjure her aspirant spouse, Amati, to renounce his pretensions to her hand, having already plighted her troth to another, while she supplicated him pitifully to prove good and magnanimous towards her. But, alas ! the nobleman was too hard-hearted to accede to her wishes, and, moreover, his vanity was flattered by the idea of wedding the fairest damsel of Florence, and he only replied that, after their nuptials, she would infallibly experience a dutiful affection for him. And thus, just two months ago, their marriage was celebrated with exceeding pomp and solemnity, in the cathedral. Ginevra had then hardly completed her sixteenth year, and was endowed with all the radiant charms of youth and beauty. On that momentous occasion, I managed to conceal myself close to the high altar, whereat the ceremony was to be sanctified, and I beheld my beloved lady, when exhorted by the officiating priest to signify her consent to the nuptial rite, fall fainting into the bridegroom's arms ere uttering the fatal 'yea,' which should bind her while life lasted to the man she abhorred. Aye, I can vouch she never pronounced that momentous word, and none heard it pass her pallid lips ! But no importance was attached thereto, and the hapless bride was mournfully borne—not gaily conducted—to her spouse's grand mansion, and while the wedding guests were boisterously banquetting and making merry, she lay on her couch, writhing in convulsions. Since that eventful day she never recovered her health, although the most famous leeches were summoned to hold grave counsel together, not one of them could discover the cause of the occult malady which had attacked her. And, meantime, my dear lady wasted away, even as does wax beneath the sun's rays. Precisely a week ago, one of her tiring-women came hither to bring me a message from her, desiring to see me straightway ; for she had, hitherto, vainly supplicated her spouse to recall me to her side, and only that day had she obtained his consent thereto. Hastening to her, I found Ginevra reclining languidly in a great tapestried arm-chair, apparently in blooming health ; but, alas ! her flushed cheeks and brilliant eyes denoted, to my experienced observation, the violence of the fever consuming her.

“ ‘ The physicians assure me I need naught but amusement to

divert my thoughts from the melancholy oppressing me ; but certes, ere long I shall depart this life !' she murmured, mournfully, and thereupon desiring the hand-maiden to withdraw, she asked me tidings of her beloved Antonio, and whether he still remembered her affectionately. Fain would I have avoided replying to these enquiries, but my heart would have failed me to disappoint her—what could I do ? . Therefore, yielding to an impulse of compassion, I told her how ardent and immutable was Rondinelli's love for her, how deep was his despair at her marriage, and how his melancholy waxed ever greater with time, instead of waning. A glad smile illumined Ginevra's pale visage when I concluded speaking.

" ' 'Tis well thus,' she murmured, ' for our separation will last but a short while. Ere long we two will be re-united, and for ever—ever ! as were united Paolo and Francesca da Rimini—but sinlessly—not freeing ourselves voluntarily from the trammels of existence by suicide, but gladly obeying our Creator's summons, bidding us enter heaven—not hell !' And this thought alone seemed to revive her waning vitality. ' Oh, prithee assure him, dear nurse,' she exclaimed, eagerly, when at last I took a mournful leave of her, ' assure him I have never ceased to belong to him alone, and will only be his unto my very last breath ! So long as I remain on this earth must I nominally pertain to another, although I really never consented before the holy altar to become Amati's spouse ; and I feel sure Antonio will equally maintain his plighted troth to me, and will never commit any unworthy action which may tarnish my honour, as well as his own. Only a few days will elapse ere we meet where mortal power can never again sever us !' And thus saying, my beloved mistress put her wan, fever-scorched hand into mine, and I covered it with my passionate kisses and tears, knowing too well, as, alas ! proved the case, that I should never again behold Ginevra on this earth, but on her bier."

\* \* \* \*

The solemn midnight hour had tolled some time previously ; a keen north wind blew in icy gusts down from the snow-covered Appenines, on the dark, deserted streets, while the moon's pallid rays were momentarily obscured by heavy clouds. The vast cathedral walls no longer echoed the footfalls of the citizens passing by, and not a single human figure animated the wide Piazza, only occasionally illuminated by fleeting moonbeams.

A strange, dull sound, which seemed to proceed from the very entrails of the earth, suddenly broke the melancholy silence brooding on all around; at first like a deep, prolonged sigh, followed by a groan of extreme agony, on which ensued a new profound silence, only interrupted by the monotonous ticking of the great cathedral clock. But suddenly the sepulchral stone lying upon the recently opened tomb which the sexton had only partially covered, with the intent of cementing it the subsequent day, apparently became endowed with animation, moving slowly to and fro, and finally a white-robed arm protruded therefrom, then a shrouded figure falteringly emerged from it—oh, horror! *the grave was giving up its Dead!* The pallid apparition rose with difficulty to its feet, and sinking down on the marble edge of the tomb, leant its head upon its clasped hands. A weird vision, passing strange was, in sooth, yon tall, slight figure, robed in its death shroud, with pallid features and rose-crowned head, symbolising the pure, departed spirit, bewailing upon her whilom tomb, the maiden's early death! At last Ginevra (for it was indeed she, in the flesh, and not in the spirit!), gazing languidly around, then casting a terrified glance at the empty sepulchre, flew with a shriek from the cathedral, speeding with feeble footsteps towards her sire's adjacent mansion. Amieri's ancient seneschal, who had already retired with all the other domestics, rose up hurriedly from his couch, at the loud, incessant rapping on the antique bronze lion's head which served as a knocker of the great portal; on approaching the loop-hole of which, he fled, precipitously to his chamber, crying, horror-stricken:

“Ah, woe is me, woe is me! Behold the spirit of Madonna Ginevra summoneth me!” and he straightway hastened to conceal himself beneath the bedclothes.

Vain were all Ginevra's endeavours to effect an entrance into her father's palace, and fruitless her reiterated rapping at its portal; whereupon, trembling with combined cold and terror, the hapless maiden directed her faltering steps towards her own lord's neighbouring residence, but, alas! with the self-same result, although Amati's servitor, more courageous than Amieri's ancient seneschal, hastened to awake his slumbering master, to inform him of an importunate visitor at that unwonted hour. Amati strictly enjoined him not to open the portal, and even forbade him to approach it, secretly suspecting so tardy a summons to be but a trick of some enemy to scare him

Completely exhausted and almost frozen, Ginevra sank on the marble bench before the archway, resignedly awaiting death, for the second and last time! But a sudden, happy thought, revived anew her failing faculties, and rising slowly, she crossed the wide market place, with wavering steps, traversing the *Via dei Rindonelli*, in order to repair to her whilom lover's dwelling. Fortunately for her, for her fictitious strength could not have lasted much longer, immediately at her feeble knock, a servant, hitherto unknown to her, unlocked the portal, though, sooth to say, he shrank back affrighted at yon pallid apparition accosting him, and hurriedly crossed himself, while demanding in trembling accents, his weird visitor's pleasure.

"Prithee, bid, straightway, thy master to hasten hither, and inform him that she whom he believed already numbered with the dead, seeks refuge in his house."

And while the amazed servitor hurried to summon his lord, Ginevra fell in a dead swoon to the ground, where, presently, Antonio, half dazed with conflicting emotions, found her lying insensible, when he rushed thither. Claspings her inanimate form in his warm embrace, and covering her pallid face with his passionate kisses, while he adjured her, in the fondest terms, to return to life for his sake, Antonio bore the hapless maiden to his mother's apartment, where eventually, with that good dame's assistance, he succeeded, after the most assiduous efforts, in restoring her suspended vitality.

On the subsequent morning, when the grave-diggers repaired to Ginevra's tomb in order to complete their lugubrious office, by cementing to its place the marble stone of the sepulchre, they beheld with great marvel the empty vault, and hurried in consternation to the damsel's father, to announce the untoward circumstance. But fruitless proved all researches for the missing corse, for only towards dusk, did Antonio Rondinello present himself at the Palazzo Amieri, to inform Ginevra's sire of the fortunate event, assuring him, at the same time, that she was lief to return to her own home, but only on condition that her father would not again constrain her to follow the spouse she abhorred. The venerable Amieri could hardly restrain his joy at such glad tidings, for he had been sorely troubled by remorse of conscience since Ginevra's death, praying God, day and night, to pardon his sin in having forced her to contract a marriage which had eventually caused her to die broken-hearted! Therefore,



on receiving this joyful news, he straightway hurried to the ancient palace of the Rondinelli, of which he now crossed the worn threshold for the first time in his life, in order to embrace his beloved daughter, thus happily resuscitated from the dead ! Thus, when Amati finally appeared to demand of him his hapless bride, the old count firmly refused to yield her up to him.

“ I regret having given up my child to you once before,” he declared, “ but never again intend to relinquish my possession of so precious a treasure.”

Whereupon Amati, after having vented his wrath in furious language, issuing from Amieri's mansion, hurried straightway to the Palazzo della Signoria, in order to present an accusation to the Confaloniere della Giustizia, against his father-in-law, for refusing to restore to him his lawful spouse. Thus, penal proceedings were straightway instituted against Amieri, which excited universal interest, and for which were engaged the services of the most celebrated lawyers of the epoch, versed equally well in Roman and canonical jurisprudence, and after much contest, the supreme Court of Justice finally emitted this memorable decree :

“ That in force of Ginevra Amieri's decease having been proved by law, and by her subsequent obsequies, the nuptials of that damsel and the Cavaliere Amati should be considered as having been virtually annulled, and she, therefore be empowered henceforth to reside beneath her paternal roof, as in her maidenhood, and even to contract wedlock anew, if so she listed.”

And, as His Grace the Archbishop of Florence solemnly ratified this decree, on that very same day, the aged Count Amieri tearfully blessed the nuptials of his beloved Ginevra with her faithful betrothed, Antonio Rondinelli, with the express stipulation that the young couple should always dwell in his own home.

And, let me add, in token of the veracity of this tale, that the memorable sentence, annulling fair Ginevra's previous marriage, is still carefully preserved in the archives of the Palazzo Vecchio, and to this very day, the lane traversed by Ginevra, in her flight from her tomb to her paternal palace, is yet called “ *la Via dei Morti*.”

# A Strange Apparition.

(FOUNDED ON FACT).

By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD,

Author of "HAYDN," "MOZART," "CARMEN SYLVA," etc., etc.

## CHAPTER I.

It was a lovely June morning, on which we all drove to the station, when I, Maggie Trevor, went out into the world to seek my fortune—in other words, to become the companion of a young lady, "beautiful and rich," according to her aunt's description, but said to be afflicted with incurable melancholy.

My little nephews and nieces clustered around me on the platform; even the very dogs seemed to know I was going away. My sister-in-law, with her sweet, patient face, stood a little behind them, and I saw her eyes were full of tears.

"Aunt Maggie! Aunt Maggie!" cried the children, "it won't seem like home without you."

"It certainly will not," agreed the gentle mother.

"Winifred," I said, in a low voice, "if Jenny had not been big enough to take my place, I would never have left you, dear; besides, only think of a rector, with an ever-increasing family, and ever-decreasing tithes; surely he ought to have no extra burden."

"Burden, indeed!" exclaimed my sister-in-law, with shining eyes.

"Well, children, I promise you," cried I, trying to be gay, "when my money ship comes in, I will go back to the rectory never more to leave you."

How little we know! My money ship did indeed come in, but back to the rectory as a home, I never returned.

While we stood talking on the platform, and waiting for my train, a very handsome young fellow, with a fishing basket slung across his shoulder, and a rod in his hand, came up to us. After the usual greetings, he said:

"Miss Trevor, I think this is the day you are going away. I am bound for Barfoot, fishing. Will you allow me to see you through the tiresome changes, and put you straight for Carlton?"

"Thanks, Frank," said Winifred, warmly. "I am so glad; my husband could not well leave this morning; but if you are going some distance, I shall be comfortable about Maggie."

I privately wondered if Winnie guessed that the fishing was only a pretext as—with a warm glow at my heart—I believed it to be; and oh, the difference to me, to see him sitting opposite to me in the railway carriage and taking all trouble off my hands.

We waved to the sweet little group on the railway platform, until a curve in the line hid my dear ones from view—and then—and then—Frank Lewis told me a certain tale, which is ever new; but as I am not writing my own history, I will pass all this over, and come to my arrival at Stansted Hall, and to the strange experience which came to me while under that roof.

The house was not modern, but very handsome, built on rising ground, and surrounded by an extensive park. The country was richly wooded, a clear stream flowed through the valley, and a lovely range of blue hills could be seen in the distance.

On entering the house, I was shown at once into a morning room, where sat the mistress of the place—Mrs. Stansted. She was rather an old lady, but plump and fair still, and with a very kindly expression.

"So you are Miss Trevor," she said, holding out her hand. "I am glad to see you, my dear, and pleased that you are bright and nice-looking. Oh! I do hope," a shade fell over her face, "I do hope you will be able to cheer up our poor darling."

"You mean your niece, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am speaking of Miss Stansted; but she is not really my niece, only a distant cousin. Still, all the same, we are the nearest relations she has in the world. But, dear me, I am talking on, and you must be tired: Simmons shall show you your rooms, and give you a cup of tea, and then take you to Miss Stansted. We dine at seven."

Thus, with a kind smile I was dismissed, and followed Simmons up the richly decorated staircase, with a heart eased a little of its home-sickness.

I had expected a low-browed gloomy old hall, and this was about as bright and cheerful as one could well imagine. My bedroom, with a small sitting-room opening into it, was simply perfect. So I took heart, and followed Simmons to Miss Stansted's room with a pleasant anticipation.

Alas ! one glance dispelled my illusions. The girl was young and very lovely, with fair wavy hair. She was curled up in an easy chair, gazing earnestly out of the window, and with the most disagreeable expression imaginable. I could not then see the sad wistfulness in her eyes, I only noticed the proud face with its haughty curves. There was no one else in the room, and after announcing me, Simmons swiftly retired.

"So you are my companion," remarked Miss Stansted, looking me over, as if I were a bale of goods. "What do they mean by companion? We shall never have anything in common, I can see that at a glance. What on earth do they mean by it?"

I began to feel angry, and the colour flew into my face. "Well, at any rate, I am here," I said, as quietly as I could, "properly engaged by Mrs. Stansted; and with your permission, I will sit down, for I am very tired."

A slight change came over the *hauteur* of her face.

"Oh, yes, pray sit down; we may as well be civil to each other for the short time we shall be together; I am sure it will not be long." Saying this, she took up a book, and appeared to be wholly absorbed in its contents.

To be even with her, I took up a newspaper which was lying on a davenport near at hand, and pretended to be reading—but my heart was sore at parting, and full of home sickness, and I could only see the children's bright faces, and Frank Lewis, now dearest of all. Tears came unbidden to my eyes, and one or two drops fell on my hand. I hated myself for my weakness, and still more, when by a sidelong glance, I saw Miss Stansted watching me.

"You don't mean to say," she remarked presently, in clear, liquid tones, "that there is anybody on this earth worth crying for?"

I threw down my paper.

"I am thankful to say I do," I answered, quickly. "All my home people are longing for me now; and even as I speak, the rectory garden rises before me; I hear the children at their play, and see my sweet, patient Winifred, sitting under the tulip tree, mending the little ones' socks, and thinking of me."

"Ah! who is Winifred, if one might ask?"

"My sister-in-law, the dearest and best of women."

A softened look came into her eyes. "How strange it is!" she exclaimed; "some lives so empty, others so full. I have no one to love me now. But I had once; oh! yes, yes!"

"And will again, I hope," I said, gently.

"No, no, never, never again; for he is gone—gone, dead and buried, perhaps—dead and buried."

Her hands fell listlessly into her lap, and her eyes had the saddest expression I ever saw.

Poor girl! Now I began to understand. She was most miserable. Perhaps by and bye I might help her. I walked over to the window, took a seat near her, and gently said, "If there is any doubt about your friend, hope for the best. Don't you think it wise to look on the bright side of things if one can?"

She bent forward, and in the lowest of tones, answered me. "Not in this house—never in this house." The affrighted expression in her eyes startled me.

"But this is the most cheerful house in the world," I made answer. She shuddered.

"Ah! you don't know who lives here; the man who drove my beloved out into the wild and stormy night, who has taken his home and place, and drove him to his death."

Her face was full of terrible excitement; but to my surprise, after a few minutes, her mood changed, and she fell back into her old listless attitude.

But I had seen a little below the surface, and bided my time.

When the gong sounded for dinner, Miss Stansted and I went down together. She was a vision of loveliness. I did not wonder at the rapid, almost stealthy, glance of admiration with which Mr. Stansted favoured her.

I was presented to the master of the house, and should have formed a most favourable impression from his open, frank countenance. He was not good-looking, being rather sandy and freckled. He was, however, a fine, well-grown man, and looked every inch a country squire.

One could see at a glance that Mrs. Stansted was exceedingly fond and proud of her son, and he paid her the most dutiful attention.

I certainly never saw a man who looked less like a villain than Mr. Stansted did. I was puzzled by the whole story, but was compelled to wait for time to unravel the mystery.

## CHAPTER II.

It was about a month after my arrival at Stansted Hall, that one lovely morning, Edith Stansted and I walked out into the park. It seemed a joy only to be alive, to ramble over the green turf, under the summer skies.

Edith and I had, day by day, drawn more closely together, and I had the happiness of feeling now, that my presence was a distinct help and comfort to the girl. Only, strange to say, she was always distant and cold to me when Mr. Stansted was near.

"We will go to the old cedar tree," said Edith; "it stands by itself, out of sight of the house, and there one cannot be overheard. I can then speak freely, in the house I never can."

There was something in her look and manner quite unusual, and as we sat down under the tree, my heart beat fast with dread of what was to come.

We sat for some minutes in silence; then Miss Stansted, looking me full in the face, asked, "What do you think of Mr. Stansted?"

This was just what I expected, and I cast about for something to say, which would not commit me to any real opinion. But she was too sharp for me.

"I know," she went on, nodding at me, "you think I am mistaken, he is frank and pleasant-looking, and you think no wickedness can lurk under those blue eyes and good-natured smile. You never were more deceived," she went on, emphatically, laying her hand on mine; "he is one of the most wicked men that ever lived—and more—I hate him so intensely that I could kill him. Yes, I should like to see him suffer—die. Nothing could be too bad for him." The look of fierce hatred in her face quite appalled me.

"Oh, Edith, my dear," I remonstrated, "oh, hush, hush!"

"I will not hush. Listen to what I have to tell you, then you can give your opinion—not before. I will recount my history. I was left an orphan while quite a baby, and lived in this house with my dear old uncle—the late Mr. Stansted. He was not really my uncle, only a distant relative; but he was my guardian, and always the best of fathers to a little lonely child. You think this place is pretty, but you don't love every tree and flower and hill and dale as I do. Oh! we were so intensely happy until he died. I often dream



that he is living, and wake up to the dreadful reality. My uncle had also another young cousin living here, to whom he was guardian and also adopted father ; for he made it no secret that Leonard was to be his heir. The estate was not entailed, and it was a settled thing that he should succeed my uncle. Oh, what a happy trio we were ! My heart aches to think of this past happiness, never, never to return. Oh, God," she groaned, " why are some people born only for sorrow, and others are so blessed."

I gently stroked her hand, but could not trust myself to speak. After a minute she went on.

" I must be quick, or *he* will find us out and grow suspicious. Well, we loved each other, and were to have been married when I was twenty-one. Uncle was so delighted : he said he could sing his *Nunc Dimittis* now, as our marriage had been the dearest wish of his heart for years. My uncle was not very old, but he was exceedingly delicate, and sometimes I had a dreadful fear that he would not live long. He was also very lame, and had a curious but beautifully made chair, by which he could propel himself noiselessly from room to room. There was a kind of desk attached, by which he could write or read at pleasure. One night my uncle and I were sitting near a bright fire, waiting for Leonard, who had gone to a political meeting. I remember it was a cold, stormy night ; the wind howled round the house, and bent the trees, and sent showers of heavy rain-drops against the windows. I noticed that my uncle seemed more thoughtful than usual ; and presently he said, drawing my head down upon his shoulder, and kissing me fondly, ' My little girl, I want to speak to you about my will ; Leonard knows what I wish. Nay, you must not look so frightened ; I shall not die an hour sooner for telling you about the will. Leonard is my adopted son, as everybody knows ; he will, of course, be my heir. The estate is not entailed—every acre unencumbered, and he will have a good fortune besides. You are rich, Edith, but I have remembered you in my will, because you are my little girl, and I love you. Also, out of respect for the old family name, I have left Robert Stansted and his mother some money, although they do not need it. I have been very careful about my will, because if I were to die intestate, Robert Stansted would be the heir.'

" Never, uncle," I cried, " that hateful man ! "

" ' It is so, Edith,' he sadly made answer, ' and he is a bad man,



all his early career has been vicious. Edith,' he suddenly called out, in a wild excited tone, 'if I thought that this house—my birthplace—the abode of good men and women for generations, would ever fall into that villain's hands, I should never rest in my grave, never ; I should come and haunt the place until he was either dead or banished.'

"I cannot tell you the effect those words had upon me, they rang in my ears then, they ring in my ears now—afterwards he laughed this off a little, seeing, I suppose, that I looked frightened. But when Leonard came home my uncle told us very emphatically that the will was in the oak cabinet in the library, and explained the secret of the spring.

"In about a month after this my dear uncle died rather suddenly, and Leonard unhappily having gone abroad to see to some business for the estate, Robert Stansted hurried down from the North, on the pretext of helping me—as being next of kin—and Leonard away from home.

"He came the day before my dear uncle died, and although my Leonard travelled day and night he was too late, and oh ! Maggie, when they searched for the will, they could not find it, and they have never found it from that day to this." As she concluded, I started so violently, that the flowers I held in my hand fell to the ground.

"But, Edith," I said hurriedly, "how could he possibly know—I see you mean that Mr. Stansted did away with the will, but how could he—how could he !"

"You are determined to take his part, well listen. Just before my uncle died, with great difficulty he reminded me about the oak cabinet and the spring. I was in too great distress to think about wills, when his life was ebbing fast away, it was only afterwards I remembered that while my dear uncle was speaking, there seemed a slight sound in the room, and I thought I saw a shadow flit away, Maggie," she ended solemnly, "that was Robert Stansted, and he stole the will from the oak cabinet."

A silence followed upon this. The birds sang overheard, and we sat so still, that rabbits with their little white tails scurried all around us, and a sweet and lazy hum of insects, filled the summer air.

But all these lovely sights and sounds were quite unheeded ; we sat side by side full of painful thought.

"Edith," I asked at length, "when did Leonard come back?"

"Ah! that is the worst part; he came the night of the funeral. Oh! there was an awful, awful scene: Leonard accused him of destroying the will, and of trying to get me away from him; at last Robert turned Leonard out of the house—it was a wild, awful night—he drove him to his death, for he has never since been heard of."

"But how could you stay here a minute after that?" I exclaimed indignantly.

"Ah! why, can't you guess?" She leaned forward with a face as white as the dress she wore. "Maggie, he is too great a coward to have *destroyed* the will. It is somewhere in this house, and I am simply staying on to find it. He goes to London occasionally, and then I search, when all the house is still; some day I shall find it. As for my darling, I have moved Heaven and earth in search of him, but anyhow, be he living or dead, I shall yet have my revenge on Robert, I feel it coming nearer, day by day, I live for it, I gloat over the thought of his being turned out of this place with ignominy. As I told you once before, my hatred is so bitter and so intense I feel as if I could kill him. I want vengeance for what he has made us suffer, I should like to see him dying before my eyes." The look in her young face was so terrible, that it made me shiver.

"Edith, my dear," I replied solemnly, you are altogether going on a wrong tack—vengeance is not yours, but God's—so surely does any human soul try to wrest any of the attributes of the Almighty, than that soul comes to grief. We must leave it dear and try to do what is right *only*. Don't you think that He who sees in secret will sometime unravel the mystery? Meanwhile it is quite right to search for the will, only you ought to try to subdue such fierce hatred. Such hatred is akin to murder."

She drooped her head, and tears slowly fell—"Yes, no doubt I am very wicked, but do, do help me, Maggie, to find the will." Then she rocked herself to and fro, and fell into the most bitter weeping. "Oh! my Leonard!" she moaned.

My heart went out to the poor lonely, motherless girl, and then and there I vowed to stand by her through thick and thin, and never to rest until we had found the will.

That morning's conversation had quite altered the aspect of things, and I longed for the gong to sound so that during dinner I might watch Robert Stansted, without appearing to watch him. That he

was a good son none could doubt, who witnessed that day, his anxious solicitude because his mother had a cold. How she came to be his mother I cannot think, for she was a dear old lady, as Edith often remarked.

I watched Robert Stansted that evening, as closely as I dared, and enlightened by Leonard's words, I read deep and hopeless love for Edith, in every look and action. Yes, that was the clue, he had been determined to separate Leonard and Edith at all hazards. I longed to be alone, so that I might think over what steps we should take. So while Mr. Stansted was lingering in the dining-room over his wine and Edith was petting and waiting upon Mrs. Stansted in the drawing-room, I opened one of the long windows, and throwing on a light shawl, went out on the terrace, which was flooded with moonlight.

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### CHAPTER III.

It was a very lovely scene I looked upon. Far in the distance I could just trace the outline of the hills, which, in this softened light, looked like mountains. I could hear the river rippling over rough stones far down in the valley, and the wind sighing through the tree-tops. At my feet lay the shrubbery walks, glistening with laurels, and farther off I could dimly see the beautiful glades of the park. I drew a deep breath of pleasure. Oh! how lovely it all was. Presently I turned into one of the shrubbery walks, and pondered deeply as to what our next steps should be. Suddenly I had a kind of feeling that I was followed. It was only a feeling, for I certainly heard no sound. I stopped and listened intently; there was nothing to be heard but the sighing of the wind, and the brawling of the river, and now and again the deep baying of some hound from the stable yard. Again I stopped and listened. All was profoundly still: and yet I knew that I was followed. I wheeled round suddenly, so as to face my foe if he were near, and I almost screamed aloud in terror, as a dark figure came out from the shadow of the trees into the clear moonlight. A tall, handsome man, with a pale face and piercing eyes, stood before me.

"Hush!" he said, in a deep-toned agitated voice, "hush, we may be watched."

In an instant, with a glad throb at my heart, I knew this could be none other than Leonard Stansted.

"You are Miss Trevor," he said hurriedly. "I know all about you, and I watch you both from afar. My dear love confides in you, that is enough for me. I am only too thankful you are with her. Now tell me all about her, quick, quick, for we are not safe here, even for a moment."

Then I rapidly told him everything of what we were going to do, and why Edith still lingered at Stansted Hall. He was deeply moved.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I never really doubted her—oh! my little love! Tell her I am now in hiding at my old nurse's in a little cottage by the sea shore, but I am always watching, and I have a plan nearly developed, which I must tell you of, but not to-night—Edith will know where I am hiding, if you mention my old nurse. I dare not write, for my letters would fall into that villain's hands. God bless you, take care of her," and in another moment he was gone.

I crept back to the house, full of my new joy, but as ill luck would have it, I encountered Mr. Stansted in the hall.

"You have chosen rather a strange hour for a lonely walk, Miss Trevor," he remarked with a deep look.

"Oh! I only went a little way in the grounds, it was most lovely," I replied, as unconcernedly as I could, but I did not like his look, and hurried into the drawing-room, where Edith was still talking to Mrs. Stansted.

I was in a perfect fever until bed-time arrived, I could hardly keep still. When at length we went upstairs I followed Edith into her room. She must have seen something unusual in my face, for she dismissed her maid at once, and locking the door, turned to me.

"Well, Maggie, oh! what is it?" Then I told my joyful news, with such deep thankfulness. Oh! the change that passed over her lovely face! Her eyes shone like stars.

"Oh! my Leonard! now, mine for ever, thank God for this—and Maggie, what a darling you are! How thankful I am you ever came here!"

"I must not linger to-night," I said, "Mr. Stansted is already suspicious, and we must not seem to be holding a long conversa-

tion." So I left her with a happy glow in her face, and went into my own bedroom, not far away. Here I let down my hair, put on my dressing gown and slippers, and partially raising the blind of one of the windows, I looked out on the fair moonlit scene. I was thinking about the lost will, and wishing—oh ! how earnestly—that it could be found, when suddenly from out the shadow of the trees, passing swiftly into the moonlight, came Mr. Stansted. I could see him quite plainly. He looked up once towards the house, then turned into the very shrubbery walk where I had gone earlier in the evening, and seemed to be searching for something. My heart beat fast at the sight. Hastily drawing down the blind and turning up the lamp, I sat down on a couch feeling frightened at—I knew not what. How long I sat there I shall never know, but I was perfectly wide awake, and thinking so earnestly about the will, I felt no inclination for sleep. Suddenly, to my intense astonishment, as well as fear, the room seemed full of a soft mist, and when it cleared away, the door came open, and into the room—propelling himself noiselessly in a beautifully made chair with a desk attached—came *old Mr. Stansted*, the man who, some months before, had been laid to rest in the family vault in Cramer churchyard. I knew him in an instant, for his portrait hung over the carved oak cabinet in the library; there was also a painting of him in the dining-room. A cold perspiration came over me, I shook in every limb—to this day I wonder I did not scream or faint. He came to within a yard or two of where I was sitting, looked earnestly at me, then taking up a piece of blue law-paper, he began rapidly to write. My teeth chattered, the beating of my heart seemed to sound in my ears, and deafened me, I quite thought I was going to die.

After a few minutes, which to me seemed hours, the apparition moved away; but, as he neared the door, he looked back at me with an entreating gesture as if he wished me to follow him—I shivered, but could not move—I seemed tied down with a heavy weight; so we remained—for how long I cannot tell—he looking at me with beseeching eyes, I ever resisting. Then the soft mist once more arose, and the whole vision faded away. As soon as he was gone I sank down upon the couch trembling and sobbing, my nerves all unstrung and nearly fainting. I am not, however, naturally a coward, so after a while when I had recovered myself



a little, I bitterly repented that I had not followed up the clue, which seemed to have been put into my hands. At last I crept into bed, registering a vow, that if the apparition appeared the next night—as I felt persuaded it would—at all risks to myself, I would find out the secret of the hidden will if I could.

I woke up the next morning with a frightful headache, for which I was thankful, as it gave me an excuse for being silent and pre-occupied.

Edith, however, was happy enough for both. “Her Leonard was not dead, so all must come right.”

She sang about the house when Mr. Stansted was away, and her face was lit up with smiles.

As bedtime approached, I grew nervous and frightened, and was almost on the verge of asking Edith to share my room. The next minute I reproached myself bitterly for this. A delicate girl like Edith must not share my horror and anxiety.

Shaking like a leaf, I entered my room and locked the door; then sitting down with an awful fear in my heart, I waited. Twelve o'clock chimed from my little timepiece on the mantel, and then he came. We went through the same experience, he looked at me with beseeching eyes, and waved for me to follow, but I seemed turned to stone and still resisted, and then the vision faded away, and I was left to my self-reproaches and to my tears.

During the long hours of that wakeful night, I pondered deeply. Being convinced that he would return once more, I solemnly resolved, that come what may, I would follow the apparition even if I dropped dead on the spot. How the day passed I cannot tell. I heard Edith's happy talk and laughter as in a dream, but through it all I saw the pale face of the old man—her uncle—and met his beseeching eyes.

“Don't stay in my room to-night,” whispered Edith, as we stood in her dressing-room with the door shut. “I am sure his suspicions are aroused, and you were so white and silent at dinner. He must not know that Leonard is alive, and where he is staying, he must not.” She clasped her hands. “He would stop at nothing. My darling's very life is in peril.”

## CHAPTER IV.

As I crossed the corridor, to go into my own bedroom, I thought I saw a shadow on the wall, as if someone were listening. Ah, me, what, after all, was this shadow compared with the one I had resolved to follow that night?

At the solemn hour of midnight, he came and looked me full in the face with the same imploring eyes. Trembling all over, and my heart beating furiously, I was strung up to the highest pitch of excitement, and I said aloud, although in a voice unlike my own, "Yes, I mean to follow you, if it be to death."

As we came out into the corridor, strange to say, my excessive terrors gradually grew less, and by the time we had reached a small study in the western wing, my nerves were beginning to recover their tone. I had never entered the room before. It was a private study of the old squire, and almost entirely lined with books.

My guide never hesitated for a single moment, but went swiftly forward to the fireplace, and bending down, he pointed to a particular square in the tiled flooring. I knelt down, and eagerly looked to be sure that I knew the right one. "One, two, three, four," I counted; yes, it is the fourth tile, and I put my finger on it. That very instant the apparition vanished away, and was seen no more.

I went back into my room, resolving to keep awake and plan what we should do. Instead, however, I fell fast asleep, and did not wake until the sweet dawn was breaking. I got out of bed, and looked at that lovely view from my windows, and noticed shafts of golden light were trembling in the eastern sky. What would this day bring forth for us?

I put on my dressing gown, and crept softly into Edith's room. Happily the door was unlocked. She opened her lovely eyes, and stared at me in the greatest astonishment. I put my finger on my lips, and she was in an instant awake and watchful. I lay down beside her, on the bed, and in a very low tone, told her all my story. As I went on with my recital, she flushed and started violently, then trembled all over. But when I finished, tears poured down her cheeks like rain.

"Oh, thank God!" she cried. "Leonard will now be righted, and you are the most wonderful, wonderful brave darling. We shall owe everything to you; it would have killed me outright."



After this we fell to discussing plans. Happily for us, Mr. Stansted was going to London the very next day, therefore, we agreed that I should find out the little cottage on the shore, and tell Leonard everything.

That night, when the house was profoundly still, we stealthily let Leonard in through a side door, and he, bringing the necessary tools, we all three made our way to the little study.

Oh, what moments those were when Leonard was loosening the tile! We looked like three conspirators. Our faces were as white as if turned to stone, and it seemed to me as if the beating of our hearts must have been audible. But, oh joy! what did anything matter now, it seemed as if nothing could harm us any more, for Leonard *found the will*. The evening of Mr. Stansted's return we all gathered in the library waiting for him. Luckily for us Mrs. Stansted was not very well and kept her room.

"John," said Edith, to one of the footmen, as she passed through the hall, "when Mr. Stansted returns ask him to come to the library for a few minutes, as I wish to speak with him."

Then we three waited. I had almost said four waited, for the portrait over the oak cabinet, kept his eyes steadfastly fixed upon us, and seemed to be waiting and watching also. After what seemed to us a long time, we heard Mr. Stansted's step in the hall. Edith and I sat by the library table; but Leonard, on hearing the footsteps, rose, and drawing himself up to his full height, stood at the table with his hand upon the will. It was a striking scene. Leonard with his pale, handsome, resolute face, and Edith's lovely profile framed against one of the windows. The sun was near its setting, a gentle breeze sighed through the shrubs, and the golden light printed a pattern of moving leaves over the table and the will. The footsteps drew nearer. He came. I shall never forget the look in his face as he entered the room. His usually healthy skin flushed to a deep purple. He sprang forward.

"So you are not dead. Go out of my house this very minute, you villain, you thief," he thundered, "I will call my men to kick you out, you double-dyed traitor."

In that wild moment, he forgot even Edith, in his passionate hatred towards the man he had so wronged. Leonard stood quietly at the table with his hand still upon the will, calm and resolute.

"You forget yourself," he said slowly and sternly, "it is you who

are the villain and the thief, and, moreover, I order you to leave my house, and go up to your place in the North, and never show your face down South again, or the law shall take its course.

"Ah! you quail at the word law. This is the first time in all your vicious life that you have put yourself under the power of the law."

"Law, whatever do you mean?" stammered Robert Stansted, the colour slowly dying out of his face.

"Did you ever see this before?" asked Leonard, holding up his uncle's will. "Who was it crept into the dear old man's room when he lay a-dying, and found out the secret of the oak cabinet and the spring? and then being a coward, as well a thief, buried it in the little study under a square of the fireplace? Who was that, I ask?"

"Oh, my God!" cried the guilty man, crushed and abject in a moment, his face as white as ashes, with the freckles showing more plainly than ever.

"Go," commanded Leonard, extending his hand, "you know my unalterable resolve, and you may think yourself lucky to escape thus easily."

Robert Stansted looked smaller and older as he crept away to the door, but he turned before reaching it, and looked at Edith. His lips scarcely formed the words "my mother." She understood him in a moment. His one good point was his love for his mother.

"She shall never know," said Edith, emphatically.

"No one shall ever know," concluded Leonard. "May God forgive you as we do."

No one ever guessed the dark secret, the will had simply turned up, that was all that was commonly known. The cousins were far too happy to wish for revenge. And the old uncle haunts no more the long corridors. His work is done. Frank Lewis and I have long since married and are settled not far from Stansted Hall. And the rectory children to their own intense delight visit often at both homes. Yes, many children now scamper up and down the great staircase, all through the wide, sunny house, and peace and happiness brood once more over the old hall.

# Three Discoveries of Professor Radix.

By EDWIN WOOTON.

## CHAPTER I.

JABEZ HENRY WEBBER was a middle-aged, middle-class Englishman, who deemed himself a Solomon, because he read, more or less inaccurately, a daily newspaper, and after reading, straightway forgot the source of his knowledge, attributing it to special illumination. He would contradict the statement made in Arctic weather that the day was cold. He was a man without an original idea—saving the one, of which he held a monopoly, which referred to his own wisdom. Constructed of perverseness, and obstinacy, and conceit, he was yet one of those who bind themselves mentally to the creed furnished them by pressmen, who laugh at their unbelief in the doctrines they enunciate.

As the father, so the son, with the difference in intensity that years would yet level.

Jabez Henry Webber, Junior, was a medical student, heavy of feature, broad of shoulder, tall, shock-headed, and too stupid for the century. Primarily he had been led to scramble through the examination barred gates, which led to the Register of Medical Ducklings, by the belief, derived from inaccurately-written novels, that students of medicine had no occupation other than playing pranks. This opinion soon became modified. Webber junior, found that the career he had chosen, so far as it afforded opportunities for pleasure, was about the most unpromising of any. He bravely, during the first few weeks of his curriculum, wrestled with chemistry, materia medica, and osteology; then he settled down into a practitioner of football. The Sciences constituting the Imperial one of Medicine, if not exact, are exacting; resembling thus the examiners charged with investigating the aptitude of candidates for the army of life preservers.

The early part of Mr. Webber's curriculum was a boomerang-like whirl. In plain language, although he had helped to win for his hospital twenty-five football matches, he found himself at the end of twelve months plucked as readily as a spring chicken.

Had one searched from the unreachable North to the equally unreachable South, of course with a telescope, no two individuals could have been found more utterly dissimilar than Webber junior and Professor Radix, the Lecturer on Chemistry and Physics at St. Methuselah's Hospital. There was no knowing the limits of the Professor's intellectual sway. He had graduated in medicine, had taken a special degree in physiology, and had won Gold and Silver medals from Royal and Democratic learned societies the world over. He had stumbled through the misty mazes of Spookdom. He was a transcendental physicist, taking one in a lecture through demonstrated processes that seemed like the impossibilities of a dream, but which were as real as a brickbat. He could lead a disciple from height to height, and when the clouds were reached could point to probabilities beyond. Did a sciolist sceptic express unbelief, he would turn to the ignorant doubter and thunderingly demand one full, free, exhaustive explanation of the simplest phenomenon of daily life. Yes, he was a great half of a man, greater in his region of mind than even Webber junior in his region of muscle, and therefore yet more lop-sided than the latter man. He could neither swim, nor row, nor play tennis, nor box. He could smoke, and drink beer: these were his sole physical virtues.

Now, at a time, it entered the Professor's mind that he was ill-balanced, top-heavy; and over this idea he brooded until he hatched out a resolve to endeavour to be as strong physically as he was mentally. Certainly, he had no intention of getting kicked in mistake for a football, nor of running himself into sudoriferous secretion at cricket. His reformation should be commenced quietly; his powers tested and developed in the manner he best could follow. So it came about that the season being summer, and the weather hot, and the Professor's place of residence lying close to the Thames, he purchased an outrigger, and proceeded to exercise himself in aquatic sports. They proved full of variety. When he was not "catching crabs," he was grabbing after a lost oar, or ramming the ribs of another adventurer's boat. One day, an item was introduced into the programme on which he had not calculated: he tumbled backwards, upset his outrigger, and, two seconds later, was floundering about amongst such fragments of the wreckage as had not sunk. The water was deep, the Professor could not swim, and he was in danger of testing with disagreeable practicability the Theory of the continuity of the Ego after Bodily Death.

Splash !

“ Keep your arms down.”

Webber junior had flung himself into the water. It was his voice that struck the Professor's buzzing ears. Then the man of muscle grabbed the man of mind and towed him to the bank.

The Professor was grateful. To offer money to this youth was out of the question. To offer him initiation into the mysteries of transcendental chemical physics would have been cruel irony. Radix knew Webber junior by repute : knew him as the bright youth, who, after attending for six months the Hospital Lectures on chemistry, gave, in answer to a question, the formula of water for that of nitric acid. But Professor Radix could not rest with a sense of so great an obligation on his mind. He had a means of returning the full value of the service he had received. Should he use it? Three hundred years ago the avowal of that which was in his mind would have caused him to be frizzled ; now it would cause him to be laughed at—sneered at, until, like talking to one's friends in Paris from one's room in London, it had become a common, every-day convenience of civilisation.

As the weeks passed, the Professor and Webber junior, became very friendly. They had, however, few subjects in common. The one that just now occupied the senior man was : “ The Source of Energy of the Cosmic Unit.” That which monopolised such mind as Webber junior possessed, was how to scrape through his “ first professional.” But they smoked. Smoking is a great bond of union between otherwise differing men ; it is a kind of sacrament, an outward and visible sign of an inward wish to live in harmony ; of wreathing, intertwining action. But smoking did not discharge the Professor's sense of obligation. When, one day, his companion complained bitterly of his bad luck in the examination room, Radix ended his mental debate, and determined to help him.

• “ Come with me,” he said, briefly.

They went to the Professor's laboratory, a place that resembled nothing else in this wide world. When there, the Professor carefully closed the door : then he opened a cabinet, and from its interior took three phials of glass, each containing a colourless liquid, and having a stopper of a distinguishing colour.

“ What do you think is in these ? ” queried Radix.

“ Explosives,” hazarded Webber junior. He always associated



Radix with chemistry, and the latter with some wrong-headed freak of nature, by which the muscleless, unathletic home-sloth had the power of annihilating armies.

The Professor laughed. "Explosives," he said, "are for fools who wish to destroy. These phials contain the materialised potentialities of the mind."

"You don't say so!" Mr. Webber remarked. He hadn't the remotest idea of the other's meaning, but something had to be said.

"Yes, I did say so," snapped Radix.

"Oh—I beg your pardon—of course." Webber junior stammered.

"This first phial—the one having a blue stopper, and which I now take up—contains a fluid which, when taken into the system stimulates the faculty of *comparison*. The drinker is enabled to estimate the true size of things, their importance and degree of genuineness. No illusion is possible while it is influencing the brain; therefore, it must not be taken before going to the theatre. The second phial, having an amber stopper, contains a fluid which will stimulate the brain to yield whatever has once been impressed on it. This third phial, with the crimson stopper, holds a liquid that has such an effect on the logical and rhetorical powers that the dullard becomes, under its influence, a mental gymnast. This preparation is really wonderful."

"They all seem pretty remarkable," said Webber junior. He had of course made up his mind that Radix, like many another great brain worker, had a soft spot! It was, the student considered, quite as likely that conscience should be bought in slabs at the cheese-monger's, as that Judgment, Memory and Reason should be producible by his companion's chemical compounds.

The Professor guessed of what the other was thinking, and smiled. He did not mind the ridicule of animals like Webber, having been used to it all his life. He had endured being laughed at by a mobile thing calling itself a Bishop. The Professor had stated his ability to create a thunderstorm. The Bishop had raged, and then laughed. But the Professor had created both the lightning and the thunder. With the patience so characteristic of him he went to another cabinet, took hence a small empty phial, and into it poured from each of those described an equal quantity of its contents. Then he handed the phial just filled to Webber, saying, "I am



giving into your hands the means of passing your examination with the most brilliant success. You have, of course, read through your work, however badly you may recollect it."

"That's the point sir."

"And, if I mistake not, when you enter an examination-room the examiners seem to take the place of gods, and yourself to be as a sinner awaiting judgment."

"That's about it."

"And if you are asked to explain yourself, or to give a reason for any statement, you flounder, something like myself when you picked me out of the water."

"Something like it."

"Well, then, take one teaspoonful of this liquid, that is sixty drops, in four times the quantity of water, just an hour before you enter the examination-room. That is my return to you for the life you gave me. Now go. Do not laugh until you have proved me a fool."

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## CHAPTER II.

THE date fixed for the quarterly examination held by the conjoint board was approaching. Jabez Webber, junior, sent in his name. He had a hope of passing level with that of being elected to the Papacy, but he paid his fees. The subjects in which he would be questioned were Chemistry, Pharmacy, and Materia Medica. He had gone through the text books of his class in each of these, and he remembered as much of their contents—well, let us be charitable and silent.

The day of the written trial had come. Webber junior took out his watch; the time lacked but one hour to that when the awful chamber would be entered. He must start. Ah! how nervous he felt. He must take something. Whiskey might be good. No—suddenly he thought of the Professor's gift. Its remembrance had nearly escaped through the lattice opening of that irretentive thing nature had placed in his skull.

He took the phial from his trunk, drank the dose prescribed, washed his hands, and started. No sudden change was apparent to his consciousness, though it had occurred. When he entered

the examination-room he was as cool as if it had been a public house, and as comfortable as when smoking his after supper pipe in bed. He did take a cigarette in the quadrangle, there being ten minutes to spare. Then he sauntered in, wrote the answers to the examination questions, and, having done so, strolled down to the theatre. Now and again he chuckled at the hollow formality of the proceedings he had just undertaken. The contents of his textbooks were so real to him that he could have written them afresh without reference to the originals, and as if he were a medical scientist of many years practical work, he could prove, amplify, weigh and doubt their contents. But in another hour from this time of jubilant complacency the compound began to lose its effect. Webber junior had brought his question papers from the table, and between the acts of the play he took them out and read them. He scratched his head. "What the deuce did I answer to this first question? Why, hang it! I don't know what it means. There, I feel too sick to hear this thing out. I'll go home to bed."

When the morning came he had serious doubts whether it would be worth while attending the oral part of the test to be held that evening. However, he might as well go through with the farce. If he got plucked he meant to quit medicine and open a sporting hotel.

The evening came. It was only by chance that the mentally choreic youth thought of the Professor's gift. He came to do so by nearly smashing the phial in his nervous efforts to extract a clean collar from his trunk. He might as well carry out the lunatic's advice, if only for the pleasure of making fun of him afterwards.

"A gentleman to see you sir," said Webber junior's landlady.

"It is I, Professor Radix," said a voice from the stairs, and following it, and the creaking of the rickety steps, and of his own boots, there came into view the form of the distinguished scientist.

"Have you taken it?" were his first words on entering.

"Yes," very coolly, "I took some just now."

"Does it affect you?"

"Not in the slightest degree. Look here Professor, I'm glad you dropped in. I was just thinking of your article on crystallisation. I can't agree with you as to the genesis of the decahedron."

The Professor grinned: the boy was well under the influence of the triple brain motor. The former took out his watch saying—"You have just half an hour, and must hurry."

Webber junior stared magnificently. "My dear Professor, I *never* hurry. The conjoint board does not pay *me*, I pay *it*, and my time like my intellect is my own."

"You have not much of either to spare," remarked Radix drily.

It was only with difficulty that Webber junior was persuaded to arrive at the examination-room in fair time. He was cooler even than yesterday. When this evening he first entered the trial chamber it was for Chemistry. He nodded familiarly to the two men facing him at the table. They stared. One of them opened the proceedings by remarking: "We approve your paper, generally, Mr. Webber. Indeed, it is in some respects absolutely brilliant, and deserving the highest praise. But you are so very original in many of your assertions that we feel it our duty to take you over some of the ground traversed yesterday. You say," referring to the paper Webber had written, "that the theories of Professor Duffer as to the elemental character of sulphur, have been considerably modified by the researches of Professor Buffer; and state in a manner doubtless intended to be facetious, but which we failed to appreciate, that sulphur is no more an element than cat's meat. Can you, without indulging in humour, prove your major assertion?"

"Oblige me with a pencil and paper," said Webber junior. Then the examiners began to stare as their candidate scribbled off empirical formulæ, and rational formulæ, and algebraical calculations as quickly as the pencil could trace the symbols.

One of the examiners was nettled. He had dealt with dunces and with sciolists, but never before with a living work of reference on chemical knowledge.

He said sneeringly that they had not advertised for a tutor, and his colleague added: "Nor for a Solomon."

Webber looked at them pityingly, as he replied: "My good men, you are paid, not to insult me, but to find out whether I know enough of chemistry to be a doctor."

"That will do sir!" thundered the one who had been questioning him. Mr. Webber rose and passed out.

When again he entered he was taken to the Materia Medica table. He seated himself carelessly. Then he began to smile. Good Lord! Fancy these busy practitioners questioning him! Why he knew his work so well that each specimen on the table called up in his mind every fact connected with its description, order, prepara-

tion, and uses: so thoroughly, indeed, that his eye detected a fraud, some false *Cusparia* bark, which he took up and then laid down with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Does the specimen displease you, sir?" asked one of the examiners ironically.

"It is a fraud, sir; a commercial substitute for the true *Angostura* or *Cusparia* bark." Then he began to detail the difference between the true and spurious drugs.

"Upon my word, Mr. Webber, we are extremely grateful to you," said the other examiner. "We were wondering when you would come along and clear up our doubts on things in general. But not to overtax you at first we will dispense with your further attendance. That will do."

Scarce need to say that the spurious character of the drug had been the very legitimate reason for its adoption as an object test.

Ten minutes later a card was handed to Professor Radix's young friend, with the inscription:

"Sir,—

I regret to inform you that you have failed to satisfy the examiners.

Your obedient servant,

DORE BOLT,

Secretary."

"Failed to what?" shrieked Webber junior. Then he burst into the examination-room. "Failed to *satisfy* you! Why you muddle-brained kangaroos, you know no more of the work you are paid to examine in than a penny doll with its head off!"

Then he left. He went right away to the Professor, and let his indignation boil over on to his head. The student was too excited to be reasoned with, so Radix took him home and saw that he went to bed.

The next day they met. Webber junior was his natural self. His remembrance of last night's proceedings was faint—so faint indeed that it was little more than a vague impression—he had made a fool of himself.

This time the Professor was wrathful. "What!" he cried, "With perfect knowledge of facts, perfect judgment of their value, and perfect reasoning powers, you failed to pass the first and simplest medical examination! Why, it is impossible."

"Then the impossible is a fact," said Webber junior.

The Professor sat glaring. Something was wrong with the working of his discoveries. What was it?

Webber junior was cursing between his groans. "One of the chaps told me," he said, "they had not advertised for a tutor; and another of 'em added, 'nor a Solomon.'"

"What *do* they want?" thundered the Professor. And then half to himself—"What on earth is wrong with my discoveries?"

"I think they need simplifying," said his companion.

"How?"

"Diluting a bit: or you might try 'em in homœopathic doses. You see all that a candidate wants is to give just such answers as will please his examiners. Its bad policy to show them what fools they are."

The Professor had learnt something.

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## The Soul-Glass.

By W. B. WALLACE.

IT was a gusty evening in March, and the wind blew from the river in spasmodic squalls of aggressive and revolutionary tendencies. More than one tall hat, four or five genuine *chapeaux* gay with feathers and ribbons, and last of all, the staid and simple poke or coal-scuttle bonnet of "Captain" Smith, alias "Salvation Sall," with its sober red and dark blue trimming, had succumbed to the sudden and treacherous attacks of these guerrillas from the realms of Æolus.

The decorum which usually characterizes the crowded traffic of London Bridge was, under these rather trying circumstances, maintained with considerable difficulty, and once or twice actually broke down. Nor, it must be admitted, were these occasional lapses from dull Philistine propriety altogether unrefreshing or without reasonable excuse. Heraclitus himself would probably have checked his tears for the vanity of things mundane, and smiled a watery smile, could he have beheld a city magnate of generous proportions, with cranium bare and polished as a billiard ball, madly careering in pursuit of a flying Lincoln and Bennett of suicidal propensities, which seemed determined to mount the parapet and immolate itself in the flowing tide rather than submit to the ignominy of capture. Niobe would have ceased her eternal lamentations and grown kittenish and frolicsome for the nonce—had it been possible to transport her that windy evening from Sipylos to London Bridge—at seeing the comical agony of Miss Constance Tompkins, when, without ceremony or warning, rude Boreas whisked away her hat, her veil, and certain mysterious artificial *chevelure* wherewith that hapless damsel had sought to conceal the ravages which time had wrought in her once redundant locks. Nor would the spectacle of the rueful, cadaverous, and "hypnotic" (vide *Daily Mail*) countenance of "Captain" Smith—as, denuded of her modest if unsightly head-gear, she encountered the jeering remarks and insolent glances of the crowd, have helped to restore the equanimity of the Theban queen.



Frederick Renton was fully alive to the discomforts of the evening, but failed to grasp and appreciate its humours—the comic element which occasionally diversified the monotony of things in general. His was one of those unhappily constituted and morbid natures which experience a perverse delight in environing themselves with misery, and which, while little elated by the sunshine, are ever at the mercy of depressing atmospheric influences. To-day—why he knew not—he was more than ever out of sorts, and the changeful skies and fitful winds of an intensely disagreeable spell of rough March weather had accentuated within him a fretful spirit of *malaise* which he could not, and, in fact, did not try to combat.

His day's work—he was an architect's clerk in the city—was over, and he was now standing at the southern end of London Bridge, which faces the broad opening leading down to the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway terminus, waiting for an omnibus to waft him in the Wandsworth direction, and looking sufficiently disconsolate, as he grasped the well-worn brim of his bowler with one hand, and in the other held his umbrella and brief-bag.

Omnibuses, when you are waiting and the weather chances to be unpropitious, are as variable, uncertain, and erratic as the fair sex—according to Virgil and Sir Walter Scott—and omnibuses of every shade, every description, and every destination—save the right one—lumbered by at brief intervals. Their kaleidoscopic hues, enigmatical inscriptions, and windows chock-full of flaring advertisements of soaps, pills, dentifrices, and tobaccos wearied the eye and puzzled the will. Here jogged along a good old stager whose morality was above suspicion; presently a dark and dangerous “pirate,” with no outward and visible sign of the *Jolly Roger* about it, but, on the contrary, every appearance of rectitude and *bona fides*, hove in sight, fishing for what should be a rare catch in London streets, the credulous and unwary pedestrian; anon, brightly breaking the interminable procession of the 'buses, a well-appointed hansom flashed by, its occupants, a youth with waxed moustaches and rakish aspect of, or aspiring to, the *jeunesse dorée* class, cheek by jowl with a painted, powdered, and bedizened damsel, whose large and languid eyes owed much of their attraction to kohl or bella donna, still more to champagne.

His 'bus had not yet arrived, when an accident occurred which roused Frederick Renton from his apathy; for that scarce and mysterious lacteal fluid commonly called the milk of human kindness was still, notwithstanding his gloomy disposition and the hard life of a city clerk, as abundant in his heart as water is on the premises of a suburban dairyman.

An old gentleman in seedy garb, whose dark complexion and strongly marked aquiline features betokened a Jewish, or at least an Oriental origin, had hailed an omnibus just about to cross the bridge without apparently attracting the notice of either driver or conductor. He had then attempted to board the towering galleon of the London thoroughfares, but lacking the necessary agility for the performance of the feat, had been violently precipitated into the street, his head barely missing the kerbstone. There he lay stunned and in a position of imminent peril, for the traffic at the point where he had fallen was incessant, when Renton, utterly and nobly regardless of the great personal risk he ran, darted forward and literally snatching him from beneath the feet of an advancing cab-horse, bore him in safety to the corner by the bridge where he himself had been standing, which formed a little oasis of tranquillity amidst the seething turmoil of life around. Hero-worship is, perhaps, the last form of idolatry to which the ordinary Londoner, although rather given to fetishism, is prone; and the fact that one man in the crowd had endangered life and limb to rescue another, excited, it is needless to say, considerably less interest than did the famous leap of the cavalier among the lions to regain his lady's glove in the time of Francis I. But then it should be remembered that Victorian days and ways in this stolid England of ours are intensely utilitarian; that London Bridge in its associations and surroundings does not in the most remote degree resemble the romantic court of the Valois; and that although the Straits of Dover are not quite twenty-five miles wide at the narrowest part, the characters of the two nations severed by them differ quite as much as they might have been expected to do had the gap been tremendous as that fabled by the ancients to exist between Tartarus and Olympus.

And so the mild excitement caused by the event died away in a few moments, and rescuer and rescued were left to themselves by the crowd, who were much too busy for philanthropy, and too matter-of-fact for heroics.

Ere long the old man recovered his senses. He found himself supported by the strong arms of his preserver, who, in the sacred cause of humanity, had forgotten his 'bus and his blues and seemed equally regardless of the fate of his hat, bag, and umbrella. Eyes black as night and piercing as the eagle's, slowly opened and looked with a searching gaze into the honest, blue, sympathetic orbs of Renton's typically English face.

"I owe you a life, young man," said the stranger, and the tones of his voice were sweet and sad as the errant chords of the *Æolian* harp sighing through a midnight corridor—"I owe you a life—a small matter so far as I am personally concerned; but that circumstance, of which you were not and could not be aware, does not detract from the gallantry of your action, and does not lessen my obligation to one who was content to suffer injury, nay, if need were, to die in the act of rescuing an old and unknown man, whose shabby and threadbare garb must mark him in a stranger's eyes as either a pauper or an eccentric."

Like most brave and generous men in similar circumstances, Frederick Renton made light of his achievement. "It was a mere nothing," he protested; "I ran very little risk, and I am truly glad to see that you are at least safe and sound, although you must have had a great shock. . . And now let me charter a cab and take you home." He felt rather mystified by the man's peculiar words and manner, and mentally set him down as not quite right in the upper story.

In the neighbourhood of King's Cross, as everybody knows, there is a network of small and narrow streets, all mean and some disreputable. It was to a house in the most squalid of these that the stranger directed the jehu to drive; nor did the address occasion Renton much surprise considering the apparent poverty of his companion.

In fact, still believing his aged protégé a meet object of charity, he took out his purse on their arrival at their destination to pay the cabman his fare, but was promptly anticipated by the old man, whose liberal settlement so moved the rugged heart of the charioteer that he, who, like most of his fraternity, possessed a mouth full of cursing and bitterness, actually touched his hat, and muttered in beery accents, "Thank ye kindly guv'nor, you're the right sort and no mistake."

With this unwonted tribute of praise and gratitude still ringing in their ears, they ascended the steps, the stranger leaning upon Renton's arm.

He gave a peculiar knock, which seemed a preconcerted signal, and they were almost instantaneously admitted by a servant of swarthy visage, who looked like an Arab, and was clad in loose white Eastern robes.

The lingering light of day was rigorously excluded from the hall, which was faintly illuminated by a brazen lamp suspended from the ceiling.

Aristotle tells us that poets love their own verses because they are their offspring, and benefactors the recipients of their favours, the persons whom they have "made," for pretty much the same reason; and it is a curious psychological fact which seems connected with the Aristotelian theory, that men are ever loth to entertain suspicion of those upon whom they have conferred kindnesses, or on whose behalf they have encountered some great danger. Does this proceed from an optimistic faith in human gratitude, or from the circumstance that when we have put forth and exerted the energies of the Self in their interest, they become for us henceforth associated with, nay, part of, that Self? In the absence of the Stagirite, that subtle reader of the human heart and unrivalled interpreter of the secret history of motive, we must leave these questions unanswered.

The fact, however, remained that, although he had apparently stumbled upon Araby in the heart of London, and entered an atmosphere redolent of Oriental mystery within barely a bowshot of the imposing but scarcely romantic terminus of the Great Northern, Frederick Renton, fearlessly treading in the footsteps of his courteous guide, presently found himself within a luxurious apartment which irresistibly recalled to his mind memories of the *Thousand-and-One-Nights*, whose perusal had been the chief solace of his rather dreary boyhood. Rich carpets from the looms of Kurdistan covered the floor; barbaric but resplendent statues of silver and gold, representing youths, maidens, and warriors in various garbs and of all nationalities were disposed in the niches; curious and costly Eastern weapons abounded, piled in glittering trophies; divans covered with embroidered silks and satins were arranged along the walls; and from a lofty cupola which formed the vault of the

chamber, a steady rosy radiance streamed down upon the various details of the scene of magnificence beneath, while a strong odour of burning ambergris, which the imagination with no great effort might well have pictured as kindled by the hands of the beauteous Zobeide herself, pervaded the place and completed its resemblance to a palace in Bagdad in the days of Haroun Al-Raschid.

At a sign from his master, the dusky servitor who had admitted them, brought *chibboques* and black coffee. The fragrant tobacco and the cheering beverage which accompanied it formed an epoch in Frederick Renton's experience, for the coffee to which he had hitherto been accustomed was not precisely the choicest product of Mocha, and he had been addicted, whether from a depraved taste or for the sake of economy, to the plebeian practice of smoking black shag in sixpenny briars.

The architect's clerk, who had just emerged from the din of London streets, feebly wondered whether he had been wafted back through the centuries to the banks of the Tigris and the splendid home of one of the Barmecides. His entertainer's appearance completed his bewilderment; for in some mysterious way, although he he had never left Renton for a moment, he had discarded his worn and shabby black frock-coat, and was now arrayed in a white kaftan which was, or seemed to be, luminant with a pure and unearthly effulgence.

"My friend and preserver," said this strange being to the remarkably dazed young man beside him, "I have brought you hither this evening to tell you as much of my history as is permitted to you to know and to me to impart, and to recompense you for a deed of bravery and devotion. The revelation of my identity is calculated to surprise even a Londoner; and the nature and value of your reward shall be left to your own choice.

"I am Araf, one, and not the meanest, of the Fallen Intelligences—seek not to learn the occasion of our fall—called Genii, or Djins, by the Eastern races, Demons by the Greeks. From time of old—from what to you would seem time everlasting—I have been sentenced to endure an almost infinite series of incarnations ere I can be restored to that state from which I lapsed; and, therefore, death is in my case nothing more than a mere episode, the passage of the pure being from one earthly tenement to another—an event rather to be welcomed as bringing me at least one step nearer to my

rehabilitation. You will thus understand why I said that life was a small matter to me.

“But your position is totally different, and enhances the nobility of your action and my debt of gratitude. This present life was and is your supreme good, your one prized possession; for you and your fellows can only guess at what lies beyond; and yet without one thought of self, without a moment's hesitation, you were ready to sacrifice this jewel for the sake of one whom you deemed to be a poor, aged, and helpless man.

“Arise, and follow me,” he concluded, as taking a small lamp from a bracket, he opened the door and prepared to precede his visitor. Their way lay through gloomy corridors, and up and down winding staircases. Araf seemed to glide on before as though borne by a cloud; the starry light in his hand diffused a subtle white vapour impregnated with perfume; and even as he inhaled it, all vestiges of doubt, uncertainty and fear, if any such still lingered there, vanished from the young man's mind, giving place to a strange and intoxicating sense of elation and freedom from irksome earthly restraints.

A low-browed door of massive iron at last arrested their progress, but it yielded to the touch of Araf's hand, and slowly revolved upon its hinges.

The Djinn and his mortal companion stood within a vault as dark but more extensive than the *Tullianum* of ancient Rome. It was black and mouldy, and its distant recesses were veiled in more than ogygian gloom, while from the groined roof the ooze, as of superincumbent waters, sullenly percolated. The atmosphere was heavy, and would have been unendurable but for the fragrance of the magic lamp, which not alone dispelled the foul vapours but enabled Renton to see that the floor of the rocky chamber was scattered with a collection of curious objects.

The melancholy cadence of Araf's voice roused him from a torpor of amazement.

“This is the House of Talismans, and of its contents you shall presently take your choice. But amidst all these priceless treasures you would only grope like the blind without my aid. Needless to say that aid shall be readily given. And first, listen.

“Before the gaze of the great Intelligences the field of the universe and the vast potentialities of knowledge lie stretched out as a map.



Their essence excludes ignorance, and distance, time and space fetter them not. Consequently that science which the fleeting generation of mankind acquires in meagre fragments, and which, toiling with the patience of ants, they put together piece by piece in the course of centuries, the Intelligences take in in all its glorious entirety in one rapid comprehensive intuition. There has been but one, framed in the dull leaden mould of humanity, to whom it has been given to rise to the pure gold of the supreme Intelligences—Solomon-ben-Daoud.

“But in pity, in cruelty, or in mockery, the Djins have from time to time constructed talismans which act as intermediaries between the feeble powers of man and the might of the gods, endowing the former, within a certain definite sphere, with the privileges of the latter. These talismans you now behold. Here are the Talaria of Mercury. Bind them on your feet and the mere wish will suffice to bear you in a second to the most distant regions of stellar space, farther than that mysterious Lyra towards which the sun and his satellites are ever tending. Wearing this Helmet of Hades you will become invisible, and will then enjoy the dangerous privilege of putting your virtue to the severest test, abstaining resolutely from the sweet and sinful simply because it is sinful, although the mystic *Tarnkappe* would enable you to touch, taste, and enjoy with absolute impunity. Rub the facet of yonder ring, the famous Signet of Solomon, and you will be instantly surrounded by legions of Djins, eager to do your bidding. In this tarnished brazen box with the rude inscription on the lid, there is a dark salve; anoint your eyes with it, and the hidden treasure-chambers of the earth and the ocean will be disclosed to your gaze,”

Araf was at this point interrupted by Renton, who, as if in hypnotic trance, had been listening without any apparent emotion or surprise to this recital of wonders.

“What” he asked, “are the properties of this talisman?” pointing to a small mirror of greenish hue, quaintly framed in dull gold with arabesque tracery.

The Djin’s lucent brow grew clouded: “Look not, my son,” he exclaimed, “upon that accursed glass. It is the work of a genius who is eternally hostile to your race, and it has ever been a gift of Eblis to those unhappy ones who have from time to time possessed it. To all it has brought sorrow, disillusion, and destruction. Heed it not, but let me tell you of other wonders.”

Renton's curiosity was piqued and whetted, and—for his was a weak and violent character—he spoke with somewhat reckless and uncalled for heat : “ I should be the first to confess the slight nature of the service I have rendered to a being for whom the life which mortals value counts for so little, and as you know, I neither expected nor desired any acknowledgment of it. But, as matters now stand, let me remind you that a promise is a promise, and that unsolicited, you undertook to explain to me the mysteries of these talismans and then to permit me to choose one of them as my reward.”

Araf sighed deeply. “ Alas ! the daring and infatuated spirit of man even now, as at the first, covets forbidden knowledge, though that knowledge entails misery as its harvest and brings death as its after-math. But the word of Araf may not be broken.

“ Rash and foolish man this baneful talisman is called the Soul-glass. The cruel Mourad, whose malicious art produced it, has endowed it with the power of reflecting for its possessor, the souls of all who look into its green depths with the solitary exception of his own, and in this he displayed his devilish hate. Had he enabled the temporary owner of the mirror to view therein the image of his own soul, he would have done him a service ; for to know oneself, humiliating as that knowledge must necessarily and invariably be, would, for a mortal, have been an inestimable boon indeed—the realisation of that unattainable good which the sages of the world have ever sighed after. But Mourad wished to bequeath a curse, not a blessing, to the human race, and therefore, while he withheld bitter but wholesome self-knowledge, he remorselessly rent asunder that veil which in mercy hides from one soul the foul secrets of another, and ordained that the hapless son of Adam who, to his perdition, should use this talisman, should view in their grim and repulsive hideousness the spirits of those whom he has loved and trusted—spirits which by reason of their luminous covering he deemed to be things of light and beauty, deceived by fair outward show, even as his deluded followers were by the veiled prophet of Khorassan. He knew well that man, to be happy, must be ignorant in these matters, and must acquiesce in this ignorance, and that for the human race truth and disillusion in their mutual intercourse mean unhappiness and death.

“ Leave, then, the fatal Soul-glass in the House of Talismans,

where at least it is innocuous. Honour, wealth, length of days, wisdom and knowledge surpassing that of Solomon—choose any of these gifts and it shall be granted. Choose, and remember, ere you choose that the next word from your lips must irrevocably decide your destiny."

"I choose the Soul-glass, and that alone, as my reward," said Frederick Renton promptly. For although men may halt, like Buridan's ass, for an indefinite period between two opinions when their decision one way or the other does not really matter a jot, they are, as a rule, ready enough to strike at once into the path where inclination leads without pausing to consult the finger-post.

Araf made no further remonstrance, but with a yearning look of ineffable pity and sadness, placed the mirror in his hands.

And then the Djin and his House of Talismans became as the shadows of a dream.

Renton found himself standing alone in the gathering darkness in the London streets, and but that he clutched the Soul-glass, he might have been inclined to believe that his recent experience had been a tissue of wild hallucinations.

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Not a hundred miles from Wandsworth Common there is a region known as the Jubilee Park Estate. Here the speculative London builder and his good friend the architect, the Orestes and Pylades of our modern Argos, who—always with an eye to the main chance—cater with bricks and mortar for the wants of a vast and exigent public, had erected, with marvellous celerity, streets, avenues, and blocks of houses, subtly calculated to meet the varying tastes, requirements, and means of all classes of tenants. Certain sportive individuals had, some people thought profanely, but perhaps not without an excusable reminiscence of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, christened the three grades of dwellings that rose on the estate, Heaven, Hell and Purgatory respectively. The celestial mansions, meant for the comparatively well-to-do, commanded a rent of forty pounds; the purgatorial habitats, intended for clerks and the lower middle class, were thirty pounds per annum; while the British workman, that man of strange oaths and sanguineous epithets, could have a congenial domicile in Inferno for twenty pounds, free of rates and taxes. The number and size of the rooms, the fittings, and the decorations varied, of course, in each case according to the amount of the rent.

Frederick Renton's slender income of necessity excluded him from the earthly Paradise, and he did not relish the prospect of Tartarus, with the British workman as a neighbour, so he was obliged to fall back upon Purgatory, where he and his wife had occupied the same house in Farrant Street for the last five years—a period which synchronized with their married life.

The poor city clerk, with his morbid sensitive disposition and shy odd ways, was a man of no friends; he simply adored his wife, in whom his whole heart and soul were bound up.

Mrs. Renton was one of those tall, fair, florid persons, with light blue eyes, somewhat large but tolerably well-shaped hands and feet, and a waist *à la* Venus de Medici rather than wasp-like. Now, at five-and-twenty, she was comely, with a comeliness suggestive of a full-blown rose, or a poppy preparing to run to seed; a few years later she would become that terribly adipose and uninteresting creature, popularly and euphemistically termed “a fine woman,” with a complexion of brick-dust and a figure calculated to drive a husband of æsthetic tastes to wild thoughts of suicide. As to her character, she was a very ordinary individual, a typical outcome of the age, and of the very delectable modern educational system. She was not irreligious, but simply without religion, and she possessed no recognisable ethical code.

It was decidedly unfortunate for her as well as for him, that her husband's daily avocations at the office in Gracechurch Street left her too much alone; a woman with no transcendental leanings and no sense of duty can scarcely be expected to “run straight” under such circumstances.

“Frederick, you are very late this evening.”

Renton, uxorious as he was, noticed that his wife's kiss was of the butterfly and perfunctory order; her breath smelt strongly of peppermint, apparently used to disguise a less innocuous odour; her eyes were dancing, and her cheeks looked as if they had been deeply rouged.

“Yes, dear,” he calmly replied, “I *am* a little later than usual, but in atonement I have brought you a present—this curious antique mirror.”

The present failed to evoke any ardent enthusiasm on the part of Grace Renton. “Just like you, Frederick,” she cynically remarked, “throwing away your money, as usual, on some shabby old mon-



strosity that nobody else would ever dream of buying, and leaving your wife without necessities—without even a decent dress.”

Now this impeachment, delivered with a lachrymose and tragic air and in a remarkably husky voice, was both unjust and ungenerous; for, with the exception of a very few shillings kept for pocket money, all Frederick Renton's salary was handed over regularly to his wife.

Not noticing this tirade he quietly advanced to the mantel and placed the Soul-Glass upon it.

“Come here, Grace,” he said, “and see how this mirror reflects your charms.”

The woman sullenly obeyed, but the next moment a shiver ran through her. “Good heavens!” she exclaimed, “that is not my face; it is the face of a fiend.” But still she gazed spellbound, with dilated eyes, into the glass.

Now was evidently the time for testing the properties of Araf's gift.

Renton, who had been awaiting the opportunity, looked eagerly over her shoulder, and this is what he saw: the semblance of a tablet, which had once been smooth and clean and polished as white vellum, but was now smirched and soiled, as though by the smoke of a furnace, containing the secret history of a soul, first weak, then wicked, engrossed by infernal fingers. The characters were those of the language of lost spirits, and were traced in lurid flames, and fiery writhing serpents coiled around the terrible page in ghastly and hideous caricature, giving it the appearance of a fragment torn from an illuminated missal of hell.

At the same moment knowledge of the language and its character was vouchsafed unto him, and the unhappy man began to read.

His wife had never loved him. She had simply married him to gain a home and maintenance—the supreme ambition of the middle-class girl and the lower-class cat. Her dower had been a moderate allowance of good looks, an empty head, a cold callous heart, an inordinate share of vanity, a sensuous nature bereft of sentiment, unsanctified by religion, unfortified by honour. As the days wore on mere passive indifference had changed to active dislike of her husband, which was none the less real and profound because, from motives of interest, it was carefully veiled. And so the road had steadily trended lower and lower. Her husband's daily absence

had afforded fatal facilities for the evil within her to grow and develop. There was no restraining influence within, there was no firm controlling hand without ; and so the woman had drifted and drifted, till she now stood there before the revealing Soul-Glass, a faithless wife and a more than incipient drunkard, in the presence of the husband who lived for her, worked for her, loved her, and believed in her, and whom she in return had most foully wronged.

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The next morning there was the following sensational paragraph in the *Daily Mail*:—

### FRIGHTFUL TRAGEDY IN WANDSWORTH.

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“Last night Mr. Frederick Renton, architect's clerk, in the employment of Messrs. Simpson & Co., of Gracechurch Street, E.C., and residing at 16, Farrant Street, on the Jubilee Park Estate, near Wandsworth Common, murdered his wife under mysterious circumstances, and, as the doctor's post-mortem examination is revealed, died almost immediately after of syncope. Agnes Severn, an intelligent girl of fifteen, in the service of the deceased couple, stated that her master came home from the City later than usual. He had gone upstairs to the drawing-room in company with Mrs. Renton, and she had heard the sound of their voices in ordinary conversation for some time. A little later on, as she sat in the kitchen, a sharp cry proceeding as she thought from her mistress, had reached her, followed by a heavy fall. Then all had been as silent as the grave. After waiting a while the girl had, it seems, with wonderful resolution ventured upstairs, opened the door, and looked into the drawing-room. She had been horrified to see her master and mistress stretched dead upon the floor, with a curious mirror, which she had never noticed before in the house, lying between them. She had rushed out madly into the street and raised an alarm. Such is the substance of the girl's statement. The neighbours flocked in, and Dr. Chalmers, of Farrant Street, was almost immediately in attendance at the scene of the tragedy. A cursory examination of the bodies led him to the conclusion that Mr. Renton had strangled his wife, and apparently fallen a victim almost the same moment to the frightful excitement which had urged him to the commission of the dreadful crime. The sad affair



is involved in considerable mystery, but inquiries instituted in the neighbourhood point to the probability that jealousy was the motive of the murder. Mr. Renton was a quiet, respectable, and sober young man, but it would seem that his wife of late had given way to habits of intemperance, and was visited by strange gentlemen during her husband's absence in the City. An inquest will be held to-day. The excitement in the locality is naturally intense."

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## My Fate.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF HÉLÈNE VACARESCO.)

I saw once, on an Autumn evening clear,  
My Fate to me, down by the shore, appear !

He was a man, of brow exceeding pale,  
Who smiled, with with'ring scorn, upon the gale.

He was a man who, ruthless, never sighed,  
While trampling on the writhing, wind-tossed tide.

He was a man who, with a callous gaze,  
Glanced on the quiv'ring moonlight's argent rays.

He was a man who, with a hopeless eye,  
Viewed Heaven's expanse, the azure even-sky.

He was a man who, without pitying word,  
Marked the wild waves by fretting breezes stirr'd.

He was a man who, on his own heart's core  
Relentless look'd—that iron heart he bore !